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Augustine's Spiritual Theology of Scripture in His *Sermones ad Populum*

by

Michael Glowasky

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ABSTRACT

Augustine of Hippo occupies an important place in the recent renewed interest in early Christian interpretation and application of Scripture. Yet, most studies of Augustine's use of Scripture to date have focused primarily on his sign theory found in *De doctrina christiana* or on his developing use of Scripture forged in the 390s in opposition to the Manichees. However, while both of these are important aspects of his thought, I propose in this thesis that when the African Doctor's use of the Bible is examined in the context which it primarily functioned for him throughout his life—that is, as a preacher—its distinct and unique spiritual character emerges as the centrepiece in his theology of Scripture. I argue that Augustine draws on his rhetorical training in general, and on the notion of *narratio* in particular, both to make sense of the spiritual strategy he finds at work in Scripture and to faithfully guide those under his care at Hippo into a deeper engagement with it. To make my case, I trace Augustine's application of Scripture to those at three progressive stages of the spiritual maturation process—catechumens, neophytes, and the faithful—and I maintain that there is a discernable pattern at work in which he applies Scripture in such a way as to progressively lead his audience into the contemplation of immaterial reality: to the catechumens, he uses Scripture as a judicial *narratio*; to the neophytes, he uses it as a deliberative *narratio*; and to the faithful, he uses it as a dialectical *narratio*. Through these progressive stages, Augustine invites his parishioners to become participants in the divine oration playing out in time and thereby progress to the contemplation of the eternal God. Through a focused study of his *Sermones ad populum*, therefore, Augustine's distinct spiritual understanding of the Bible, in which its character is intimately tied to the Christian spiritual maturation process, is found to be at the heart of his theology of Scripture.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACW	*Ancient Christian Writers*
AS	*The Augustine Series*
AugStud	*Augustinian Studies*
BR	*Revue Bénédictine*
CCSL	*Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*
CollAug	*Collectanea Augustiana*
CSEL	*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*
FC	*Fathers of the Church*
GNO	*Gregorii Nysseni Opera*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
LCL	*Loeb Classical Library*
ML	*Modern Library*
NPNF	*Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*
OCT	*Oxford Classical Texts*
PG	*Patrologia Graeca*
PL	*Patrologia Latina*
REAug	*Revue d'Études Augustiniennes*
RSV	*Revised Standard Version*
SC	*Sources Chrétiennes*
SP	*Studia Patristica*
SPM	*Studia Patristica et Mediaevalia*
SVC	*Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae*
VC	*Vigiliae Christianae*
WSA	*The Works of Saint Augustine, a translation for the 21st century*

Abbreviations for primary sources are listed in the bibliography.

DECLARATION AND STATEMENT OF COPYRIGHT

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Augustine recognized as well as anybody the importance of community for spiritual progress. I have come to realize the value of this insight in a new way over the past four years as well. Where I am today would not be possible without the community of support I have enjoyed both before and during my doctoral work. First of all, I have been blessed to have had a number of outstanding teachers and mentors during the course of my theological studies. I owe an especially deep debt of gratitude to Hans Boersma, who first introduced me to the patristic world and to to the importance of Scripture in that world. I have no doubt that his demanding encouragement was the main contributing factor in my decision to pursue doctoral work. Upon taking up my studies at Durham I have had two mentors, each of whom have been vital for the completion of this thesis. The guidance I received from Carol Harrison at the initial stages of this project has, no doubt, shaped this study in more ways than even I realize. Her patient prodding to push questions further and steadfast insistence that I read Augustine on his own terms has left a lasting impression on me and, I hope, on this thesis as well. Furthermore, I have benefitted immensely from the sage counsel of my second mentor, Lewis Ayres. His wealth of knowledge, keen eye for detail, and wise judgement continually breathed new life into this thesis. He has taught me more about how to research and craft an argument than he can know. I am deeply grateful for his tireless supervision.

I have also profited from the kind encouragement of many friends along the way. I am especially thankful for the support I received over the final two years of study from the Jesuit Centre for Catholic Studies at St. Paul's College, University of Manitoba, which has made the completion of this thesis possible. Fr. Jeffrey Burwell, S.J. and Meredith Bacola, in particular, went above and beyond to see that my time at the Centre was fruitful and rewarding. I am equally grateful for the community at St. Alphonsus Parish, especially for Fr. Janusz Maroń, O.F.M. Cap., whose theological conversation has been a source of intellectual stimulation and spiritual nourishment. A number of other friends have served as valuable conversation partners at various points during the course of this journey as well. I think especially of Susan van Duinen, Phil Davisson, Roy Jeal, Amos Shelly, Mark Moody and Jeff Ansloos. I have also benefitted greatly from the brief conversations I have had with a number of like-minded scholars at various scholarly meetings. Parts of this study have been presented at the annual meetings for the Canadian Society of Patristic Studies and the North American Patristic Society, as well as at the Patristic, Medieval and Renaissance Conference at Villanova University. I am grateful for all the feedback I received at these meetings. This thesis is all the better for it.

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1
INTRODUCTION

The past few decades have seen a dramatic shift in the way scholars approach patristic

interpretation of Scripture. As Brian Daley has noted, "After centuries of neglect, even hostile

dismissal . . . the efforts of early Christian writers to interpret the Bible have recently been

watered into life again."[1] Indeed, the previous two centuries were rife with criticisms levelled

against the fathers' allegorical or figurative readings and their supposed lack of concern for the

historical character of the biblical text. In a particularly direct reproach near the end of the

nineteenth century, Adalbert Merx stated unequivocally: "Where allegory and its variations,

anagogy and the moral explanation appear, the meaning of the text is murdered."[2] Even the

twentieth century witnessed the sharp critique of early Christian exegetical practices. The

great patristic scholar R. P. C. Hanson, for example, soundly criticized Origen's exegesis, in

particular, for not giving history its proper place, stating: "In his [Origen's] view history, if it

is to have any significance at all, can be no more than an acted parable, a charade for showing

forth eternal truths about God."[3] This same denigration of history, Hanson points out

elsewhere, led to the "exegetical contortions" that marred the doctrinal debates of the fourth

century.[4] However, in contrast to these criticisms, positive appraisals of patristic exegesis have

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[1] Brian E. Daley, "Is Patristic Exegesis Still Usable? Some Reflections on Early Christian Interpretation of the Psalms," in *The Art of Reading Scripture*, ed. Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 69.

[2] Adalbert Merx, *Die Prophetie des Joel und ihre Ausleger von den ältesten Zeiten bis zu den Reformatoren: eine exegetisch-kritisch und hermeneutisch* (Verlad des Buchh. des Waisenhauses, 1879), 112. Quoted in Robert Louis Wilken, "In Defense of Allegory," *Modern Theology* 14 (1998), 197.

[3] R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture* (London: SCM, 1959), 364.

[4] R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 826.

recently become more common.[5] Distinctions such as "allegorical" versus "typological," which were once accepted as helpful categories for delineating between different early Christian approaches to the Bible, are now recognized as too narrow to account for the various polemical, economic, and pastoral situations in which the fathers' exegesis was forged.[6] Historians and theologians alike have become increasingly aware of the inherent dangers involved in over-simplifying patristic interpretive practices and have come to see the importance of understanding patristic exegesis within the complex interplay of the historical, philosophical, and theological elements that contribute to each writer's perspective. The lasting insight of recent scholarship on this topic, then, is its recognition that it is important to ask *why* and *how* the emphases and nuances in individual patristic writers' approaches to the Bible developed before they can be properly evaluated on their own terms.[7]

The present study aims to make a contribution to this growing body of literature by focusing on the pivotal character of Augustine of Hippo. My goal in this thesis is not to focus my attention solely on his exegesis, but rather to take a step back from his exegetical practice and consider the theology of Scripture that informs his hermeneutic. To do this, I claim, his view of Scripture cannot be examined in isolation, but must be seen within the broad context of the Christian life. This is because, for Augustine, Scripture is intimately bound up with the Christian

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[5] Much of this renewed interest can be traced back to the *nouvelle théologie* movement in France during the previous century. In particular, see Henri de Lubac's *Exégèse médiévale: les quatre sens de l'Écriture,* vols. 1-3 (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1959, 1961, 1964). For an excellent introduction to some of the main issues at play in this shift, see Lewis Ayres, "Patristic and Medieval Theologies of Scripture: An Introduction," in *Christian Theologies of Scripture: A Comparative Introduction,* ed. Justin S. Holcomb (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 11-20.

[6] For what is probably the most influential critique of such a view, see Frances Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[7] The collection works that take this approach is too vast to enumerate. However, the single best example is Charles Kannengiesser ed., *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

experience of spiritual maturation.[8] Scripture is a unique book that cannot be studied in the same way as one studies other works; it requires the reader to inhabit it and it inhabits the reader in a unique and mysterious way.[9] As a pastor, Augustine came to see that engaging with Scripture involves a process in which Scripture "grows along with" (*cresceret cum*) its readers.[10] Pamela Bright has observed that this "original and finely polished notion about the transformative dynamics of reading the biblical text" lies at the heart of Augustine's theology of Scripture.[11] For Augustine, she continues, the process of reading Scripture is "transformative by nature. It is a journey in which more than the discovery of the text is at stake. It is a journey of self-discovery and self-transcendence. In short, it is an ascent to Wisdom."[12] In Augustine's understanding of Scripture, therefore, "[t]ext and reader are bound together in a kind of transformative mutuality."[13]

A "Spiritual" Theology of Scripture

It is the "ascent to wisdom" by way of a "transformative mutuality," to borrow Bright's words, that I mean when I speak of Augustine's "spiritual" theology of Scripture. There are two parts to this definition. In the first place, the "ascent to wisdom" speaks of an intellectual movement from the sensible world of material images to the intellectual world of ideas. From his conversion

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[8] See *serm*. 229J.4, where Augustine says that Christians are defined by how they read Scripture.

[9] Until he realized this, he says, his sharpest wit could not penetrate Scripture's meaning. *Conf*. 3.5.9.

[10] *Conf*. 3.5.9.

[11] Pamela Bright, "Augustine and the Ethics of Reading the Bible," in *The Reception and Interpretation of the Bible in Late Antiquity: Proceedings of the Montreal Colloquium in Honour of Charles Kannengiesser*, 11-13 October 2006, ed. Lorenzo DiTommaso and Lucian Turcescu (Boston: Brill, 2008), 59.

[12] Bright, "Augustine and Ethics," 61.

[13] Bright, "Augustine and Ethics," 64.

onward, Augustine was deeply committed to the immateriality of God. He recounts in his

Confessions how he came to the important insight that God is immaterial through Ambrose and

the "books of the Platonists" (*libri platonicorum*), which is a feature of his thought that remained

central throughout his life.[14] As a Manichee, he had conceived of God as an extended material

substance, which left him with the problematic view that God is finite and divisible.[15] Learning

to conceive of immaterial substances, however, liberated him from his false conception of God

and enabled him to conceive of God as immaterial, which, he says, corrected virtually every

other misconception of God that he previously had.[16] This insight had monumental significance

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[14] Lewis Ayres has identified five central elements in Augustine's account of this new understanding of God in *Conf.* 7.10.16ff. In the first place, Augustine came to see that God was "eternal and everywhere present." Second, he "realized that God was distinct from all, and yet calling to and drawing all things towards Truth through a benevolent providence." Third, Augustine saw that "God was Being itself." Fourth, he realized that "all things that are not Being itself exist only by participation in God." Fifth, Augustine found "a paradoxical relationship between the soul and God." In addition to this list, Ayres suggests we should add Augustine's realization that God is simple. Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 367.

      The body of literature on the place of Neoplatonism in Augustine's thought is enormous. Suffice it to say here that Prosper Alfaric had proposed the thesis that Augustine was converted to Neoplatonism first and then later to Christianity in *L'évolution intellectuelle de saint Augustin. 1. Du manichéisme au néoplatonisme* (Paris: Émile Noury, 1918). Pierre Courcelle undercut this "double conversion thesis" by showing that there was a group of Neoplatonic Melanise Christians, including Ambrose, which Augustine would have been able to adapt a Neoplatonic-Christian synthesis from in *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin*, 2nd ed. (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1968), 93-174. Building off these two foundational studies, the extent to which Augustine relied on Neoplatonic thought from his conversion onward has been one of the primary subjects of scholarly debate in the latter half of the twentieth century. The most staunch advocate for a strong Neoplatonic influence is probably Robert J. O'Connell. O'Connell has argued in a number of works that Augustine remained continually indebted to Neoplatonism, especially in his understanding of the soul, through much of his career, at least up to the second decade of the fifth century; see Robert J. O'Connell, *Augustine's Early Theory of Man* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968); "Pre-Existence in the Early Augustine," *REAug* 26 (1980): 176–188; and *The Origin of the Soul in Augustine's Later Works* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1994). For a counter argument that Augustine's thought was, from first to last, decidedly Christian, see Carol Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). For a survey of scholarship surrounding O'Connell's central thesis, see Ronnie J. Rombs, *Saint Augustine and the Fall of the Soul: Beyond O'Connell and his Critics* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 3-15. For an excellent but very introductory overview of the main scholarly positions taken on the role of Platonism in Augustine's thought at his conversion, see Mark J. Boon "The Role of Platonism in Augustine's 386 Conversion to Christianity," *Religion Compass* 9:5 (2015): 151-161.

[15] *Conf.* 7.1; cf. 7.5.

[16] *Conf.* 7.9.13-15; 5.10.19. This crucial doctrine for Augustine's theology of Scripture must be read against the backdrop of his Manichaean past. As a hearer among the Manichees, Augustine learned that all substances consist of matter. On the influence Manichaeism exerted on Augustine's thought, see the survey of literature in Julien Ries, *Les études manichéennes* (Louvain: Centre d'histoire des religions, 1988), 167–174; and also Elizabeth A. Clark,

for his subsequent theology. As Carol Harrison has commented, "it is the idea of a transcendent, spiritual reality, beyond temporal, created, mutable existence, in which human beings find their ultimate origin and being, and discover eternal truth" that "revolutionized Augustine's thought when he read the books of the Platonists and which provided the crucible in which his Christian faith was transformed."[17] As we will see, it also plays a central role in his understanding of the mutually transformative dynamics at work in one's encounter with Scripture.

However, work on Augustine's exegesis has, too often, taken a non-bodily sense of "spiritual" as normative in Augustine's hermeneutic.[18] This has led to puzzlement over the historical awareness Augustine seems to display on a number of occasions, especially his

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"Vitiated Seeds in Holy Vessels: Augustine's Manichean Past," in *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith* (Lewiston/Queenston: Mellon, 1986), 291–349. For an argument that there were significant lingering effects of Manicheaism on Augustine's thought, see Jason David BeDuhn, *Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma, Volume 1: Conversion and Apostasy, 373-388 C.E.* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Jason David BeDuhn, *Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma, Volume 2: Making a "Catholic" Self, 388-401 C.E.* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013). James J. O'Donnell rightly cautions us, however, that we must be careful about speaking of Augustine's Manichean conception of God, since, he observes, "Augustine's idea of God in his Manichean days was itself an eclectic mixture, guided and directed by the Manichees to be sure, but containing contributions from his reading." James J. O'Donnell, *Augustine, Confessions. Text and Commentary*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 392. We know, for example that Augustine read Cicero and Pliny, who held Stoic views. Thus, classical Stoicism has been recognized as a source for his materialism quite apart from Manichaeism. For the possible influences of Stoicism on his thought, see G. Verbeke, *L'evolution de la doctrine du pneuma du stoicisme à s. Augustin.* Étude philosophique (Paris: desclée de Brouwer, 1945), 387-544, who claims that Augustine's reliance on incorporeality was unique in the West and that Augustine's inability to conceive of immaterial substances was the result of the Stoic materialism that formed the philosophical background of the West. On this score, see also, C. Baguette, "Une période stoïcienne dans l'évolution de la pensée de saint Augustin," *REAug* 16 (1970): 47–77. David Paulsen has argued in a series of articles that the corporeal conception of God was prevalent in major Christian thinkers, including Origen, up to and including the fourth century in David L. Paulsen, "Early Christian Belief in a Corporeal Deity: Origen and Augustine as Reluctant Witnesses," *HTR* 83 (1990): 107–14; "Reply to Kim Paffenroth's Comment," *HTR* 86 (1993): 235-239; Carl W. Griffen and David Paulsen, "Augustine and the Corporeality of God," *HTR* 95 (2002): 97-118. However, Paulsen's thesis can hardly be maintained, as Kim Paffenroth has shown in "Paulsen on Augustine: An Incorporeal or Nonanthropomorphic God?" *HTR* 86 (1993): 234–35.

[17] Harrison, *Rethinking*, 39-40.

[18] This is, at least in part, the result of viewing his understanding of Scripture through the lens of his sign theory and in opposition to Manichean dualism. For a strong view of Augustine's "spiritual" interpretation of Scripture as heavily Platonic, and therefore equated solely with immateriality, see Roland Teske, "Spirituals and Spiritual Interpretation in Augustine," *AugStud* 15 (1984): 65-81. Teske writes this article in response to William A Schumacher, *Spiritus and Spirituales: A Study in the Sermons of Saint Augustine* (Mundelein, IL: St. Mary of the Lake Seminary, 1957), who makes the case that Augustine understood and used the term "spiritual" in its Pauline (i.e. not Platonic) sense.

sermons, which some say clashes with the allegorizing tendencies of the Neoplatonic exuberance he shows as a young Christian.[19] Frederick Van Fleteren, for example, observes that the "allegorical" tone of Augustine's early exegesis, in which he "solved problems arising from anthropomorphic descriptions of God and from apparent contradictions," stands in stark contrast with his mature writing, in which the "historical or literal meaning of the scriptural text is most important."[20] Thus, scholars have made much of what they see as Augustine's changing perspective on Scripture, from his initial tendency to explain the historical and material images of Scripture in immaterial terms as a young Christian to his greater appreciation for history and matter as a mature bishop. Karlfried Froehlich characterizes the common perception well, saying: "The mature Augustine outgrew the methodology of easy allegorization. In fact, during the final decades of his career, he sought wherever he could to vindicate the 'proper' sense of biblical words and stories—the literal sense."[21] To be sure, there are developments in Augustine's exegetical practice throughout his life, as there are in virtually every area of his thought. However, I maintain that what appears to be a greater attention to historicity and materiality in his sermons as a mature bishop is not primarily the result of a greater appreciation for history as such; rather, I claim, his attention to the concrete aspects of humanity's temporal existence in his sermons should be attributed to his deployment of the strategy he finds in

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[19] Lewis Ayres provides a helpful corrective to the overemphasis on the influence of Neoplatonism in Augustine's thought when he remarks, "Augustine's engagement with Neoplatonic writing occurred during his progress back toward Christianity – and at a time when that journey seems to have occupied center stage in his mind. His engagement with them subsequently occurred as a part of an attempt to articulate his Christianity." "God," in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Alan Fitzgerald and John Cavadini (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 387.

[20] Frederick Van Fleteren, "Augustine's Principles of Biblical Exegesis, De Doctrina aside: Miscellaneous Observations," *AugStud* 27 (1996), 108, 126.

[21] Karlfried Froehlich, "'Take up and read': basics of Augustine's biblical interpretation," *Interpretation* 58 (2004), 6.

Scripture itself—a strategy intended to guide readers into spiritual maturity through the contemplation of eternal realities.

Therefore, it is reductive to hold that Augustine's spiritual theology of Scripture refers *only* to the immaterial interpretation of texts. The process of intellectual ascent must be paired with the second part of Bright's definition. That is to say, Augustine's spiritual theology of Scripture must also be viewed in light of the "transformative mutuality" that characterises the process of Christian maturation. For Augustine, the process of Christian maturation is a process by which, by grace, the soul is formed and re-formed so as to be able to contemplate God. It is a process through which one is guided beyond the sight of *oculus corporis* and *imaginatio*, to *mentis intuitum*.[22] By calling Augustine's theology of Scripture "spiritual," therefore, I mean to suggest that it is bound up with the *process* by which one progresses, by degrees, to the contemplation of God. It is not simply a matter of matching material signs to immaterial referents, but includes every step along the journey by which one's soul is transformed in such a way as to be able to perceive immaterial reality. This encompasses doctrinal training and moral formation, as well as participation in the sacraments of the Church. When I speak of Augustine's "spiritual" theology of Scripture, then, I mean to speak of the intrinsic role Scripture plays in the process of spiritual maturation in his thought. To be sure, allegorical or figurative interpretation of Scripture is central in this process, but it is not the totality of it. Therefore, it is my concern for the particular character of Scripture that draws its readers into itself and then beyond itself to the contemplation of the eternal Trinitarian reality that will determine the course I chart.[23]

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[22] These distinctions appear in *C. Adim*. 28.2, which dates to 393 or 394. However, Augustine does not seem to depart from these distinctions for the rest of his life. See Kari Kloos, *Christ, Creation, and the Vision of God: Augustine's Transformation of Early Christian Theophany Interpretation* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), 123.

[23] Though there are numerous works on aspects of Augustine's hermeneutics, studies on his theology or doctrine of scripture are surprisingly few in number. There have really only been four scholars who have attempted to reconstruct his doctrine of scripture in any significant way over the past sixty years or so: A. D. R. Polman, *The*

I take my point of departure from the growing scholarly recognition of the rhetorical

basis for Augustine's view of Scripture. Beginning with Gerhard Strauss in the late 1950s, and

carried on by scholars such as Kathy Eden, Robert W. Bernard, Robert Dodaro, and, most

recently, Michael Cameron, it has become increasingly accepted that Augustine's fundamental

framework for interpreting and understanding Scripture is rhetorical.[24] Unlike many of his

forbears, Augustine was almost exclusively self-taught in matters of theology and philosophy.

He was, however, formally trained in rhetoric. It is only natural, then, that his rhetorical training

played a determinative role in his thinking about Scripture, the quintessential communicative

work. However, unlike most of the previous studies, I will focus less on his application of

rhetorical techniques and pay more attention instead to the underlying framework that allows for

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Word of God According to Saint Augustine (1955; trans. A. J. Pomerans; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1961), esp. 39-74; Isabelle Bochet, *«Le firmament de l'Écriture». L'herméneutique augustinienne* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 2004), 11-12, 33-53; Pamela Bright, "St. Augustine" in *Christian Theologies of the Scripture: A Comparative Introduction*, ed. J. S. Holcomb (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 39-59; Tarmo Toom, "Augustine and Scripture" in *Augustine and Modern Theology*, ed. C. C. Pecknold and T. Toom (New York: T&T Clark, 2013), 75-90. Until recently, virtually nobody has attempted to construct a comprehensive account of Augustine's theology of preaching. Maurice Pontet, in the first chapter of his work on Augustine's exegesis offers something of an account, but more recently Peter Sanlon has written the first sustained work studying Augustine's theology of preaching directly. Maurice Pontet, *L'Exégèse de S. Augustin Prédicateur* (Paris: Aubier, 1945), 35-110; Peter Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014).

[24] Gerhard Strauss, *Schriftgebrauch, Schriftauslegung, und Schriftbeweis bei Augustin* (Tübingen, 1959), 74-148, makes a strong case that Augustine conceptualized God's revelation as a rhetorical oration. Robert W. Bernard, "The Rhetoric of God in the Figurative Exegesis of St. Augustine," in *Biblical Hermeneutics in Historical Perspective: Studies in Honor of Karlfried Froehlich on His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Mark S. Burrows and Paul Rorem (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 88-99, took Strauss's claim further, examining how Augustine's language theory is applied to scriptural texts and historical events. Kathy Eden has also written numerous works on the impact of the classical rhetorical tradition on Augustine's view and use of Scripture since 1990. See "The Rhetorical Tradition and Augustinian Hermeneutics in *De doctrina Christiana*," *Rhetorica* 8 (1990): 45-63; Economy in the Hermeneutics of Late Antiquity," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 28 (1995): 13-26; and especially, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition: Chapters in the Ancient Legacy and its Humanist Reception* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). Furthermore, Robert Dodaro has published a number of articles that looked at rhetoric in Augustine's exegesis. See especially "Literary Decorum in Scriptural Exegesis: Augustine of Hippo, *Epistula* 138" in *L'esegesi dei Padri latini: dale origini a Gregorio Magno: XXVIII Incontro di studiosi dell'antichitàcristiana, Roma, 6-8 maggio 1999* (Roma: Institutum patristicum Augustiniana, 2000); "*Quid deceat videre* (Cicero, *Orator* 70): Literary Decorum in Augustine's Defense of Orthodox Discourse," *SP* 28 (2001): 70-83; and "Language Matters: Augustine's Use of Literary Decorum in Theological Argument," *AugStud* 45 (2014): 1-28. Most recently, Michael Cameron has published a number of pieces also highlighting the rhetorical character of Augustine's view of Scripture. See especially, "'She Arranges All Things Pleasingly' (Wis. 8:1): The Rhetorical Base of Augustine's Hermeneutic," *AugStud* 41 (2010): 55-67; and *Christ Meets Me Everywhere: Augustine's Early Figurative Exegesis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

his particular exegetical maneuvers. The key rhetorical insight for this study is that form and content, *verba* and *res*, are not radically distinct; the way something is communicated is directly tied to the content being communicated. My work grows out of this basic fundamental principle. Therefore, I pay particular attention to *how* Augustine interprets and communicates Scripture in the effort to determine *what* he understands Scripture to be.

The *Sermones ad Populum*

It is important to recognize that Scripture formed and infused virtually every aspect of early Christian church life. Thus, looking solely at Augustine's sermons, as I do in this study, will not provide an exhaustive treatment of the topic.[25] However, by turning to his *Sermones ad populum*, we find unique insight into the transformative property of Scripture as Augustine actively applies it to the life of his congregation.[26] This is the aspect I aim to focus on in this study. We find in his *Sermones* some of the most vivid descriptions for the importance of Scripture for the life of the Christian. He speaks of Scripture as the food for the Christian, the "bread" (*panem*) that sustains the soul while sojourning here on earth.[27] Christians require Scripture; they need to listen to it and chew on what they hear as a cow chews its cud.[28] Even if one is well-versed in

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[25] Scholars estimate that, between Augustine's *Sermones ad populum*, his *Ennarationes in Psalmos* and his *tractates* on the Gospel and first epistle of John, we only have one tenth, or even one fourteenth, of the total number of sermons he preached over his nearly four decades as priest and bishop in Hippo. See Pierre Verbraken, "Foreword," in WSA III/1, 11.

[26] Not since Maurice Pontet has there been a full-length study undertaken of Augustine's use of Scripture in his *Sermones ad populum*. However, in recent years, greater attention has been paid to Augustine's sermons as primary, rather than merely supplemental, sources in works on Augustine. For what is probably the best argument as to why the sermons are rightfully used alongside, and not subordinate to, his theological treatises, see Stan Rosenberg, "Beside Books: Approaching Augustine's Sermons in the Oral and Textual Cultures of Late Antiquity," in *Tractatio Scripturarum. Philological, Historical and Theological Studies on Augustine's Sermones ad Populum*. Ministerium Sermonis II, ed. G. Partoens, A. Dupont and M. Lamberigts (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 405-442.

[27] *Serm.* 56.10 (RB 68 32). Cf. *serm.* 46.24; *serm.* 130A.1.

[28] *Serm.* 5.1; *serm.* 53A.14.

Scripture, it is important to be continually reminded of what it says.[29] It should be chanted every

day to nourish the soul,[30] so that one will be able to pass beyond the temporal realm to

understand and love eternity.[31] In this life, it aids the Christian, serving as a "sword" (*gladius*)

and as a witness to Christ.[32] What is more, it is freely available to anyone, both good and evil.[33]

It is like a mother hen, guiding her young, and also like a "mirror" (*speculum*) reflecting back on

its reader.[34] However, only those who listen to it or read it properly allow it to make a "nest"

(*nidum*) in their minds and so perceive the meaning of the words in their hearts.[35] For those who

do not listen to it properly, the words of Scripture remain as mere sounds in the ear, their

meaning never penetrating the heart.[36] God has graciously provided "springs" and "pastures" in

Scripture on which people may either "feed and drink" (*pasce et bibe*) or "trample and muddy"

(*conculcare et turbare*).[37] In order to understand Scripture properly, one must always be

"attentive" or "eager" (*intentis*)[38] to the subtleties and nuances it contains, for it often speaks in

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[29] *Serm.* 125.1; *serm.* 139A.1; *serm.* 223F.1.

[30] *Serm.* 384.1.

[31] *Serm.* 117.16-17.

[32] *Serm.* 313.4 (PL 38 1424); *serm.* 346A.2.

[33] *Serm.* 4.31.

[34] *Serm.* 264; *serm.* 203A.6; *serm.* 49.5 (CCSL 41 618).

[35] *Serm.* 343.1 (RB 66 28).

[36] *Serm.* 28.4.

[37] *Serm.* 47.12 (CCSL 41 580; Hill 2:307).

[38] *Serm.* 32.2 (CCSL 41 404).

"code" (*significat*).[39] Above all, one must approach Scripture with humility, having one's pride melt before it, for it is the face of God to Christians sojourning here on earth.[40]

Despite being replete with descriptions of the importance of Scripture, the *Sermones* themselves present readers with some unique challenges. They differ from Augustine's treatises in style and tone, being less systematic and more pastoral. This is a natural byproduct of their particular context. As Anthony Dupont has stated, "The primary difference between his doctrinal writings and his homilies is rooted in the latter's concrete liturgical context and their direct contact with a (mostly) sympathetic audience."[41] But, as Adam Ployd has commented, the difference in style presents the greatest challenge to readers: "The extended analysis and topical focus that one finds in works such as *On the Trinity* and *On Baptism* are absent from the sermons, which often appear, at first reading, to be wandering snippets of Augustinian exegesis, cobbled together into brief rhetorical performances."[42] Making sense of these "wandering snippets" is not an easy task. That is why Hildegund Müller has characterized the sermons as "the most elusive of Augustine's literary forms," which are "at the same time deceptively familiar and hard to appreciate" because they appear to the modern reader to be "an irritatingly amorphous mass."[43] The challenge of their style and tone has caused the sermons to be marginalized in discussions of various aspects of Augustine's theology.

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[39] *Serm.* 362.28 (PL 39 631; Hill, 10:264).

[40] *Serm.* 22.7.

[41] Anthony Dupont, *Gratia in Augustine's Sermones Ad Populum During the Pelatian Controversy* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 21.

[42] Adam Ployd, *Augustine, Trinity, and the Church: A Reading of the Anti-Donatist Sermons* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 20.

[43] Hildegund Müller, "Preacher: Augustine and His Congregation," in *A Companion to Augustine*, ed. Mark Vessey (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 300.

To be sure, in recent years, appreciation for the sermon as belonging to a distinct genre within early Christian literature has increased. It is now widely recognized that the sermons of patristic authors in general, and of Augustine in particular, have common methods and aims.[44] Michael Cameron has summed up the basic features of the Christian sermon well, saying:

> The Christian rhetorical project of the sermons had goals and methods that differed from the prosecutorial mode of the treatises. The reality that Augustine's hearers were mostly simple, unsophisticated believers is significant for understanding his approach. The sermons are neither dumbed-down doctrine for the masses nor souped-up expositions of the "true" sense of the Bible. They were instruments for deepening Christian conversion, contributions to a vast re-orientation of thought, feeling, and practice in late antiquity, precious fragments of what Averil Cameron called "the hidden iceberg of Christian discourse."[45]

Early Christian sermons were constructed around distinct aims and methods. They can no longer be treated as appendages to doctrinal treatises, for it is now recognized that they constitute a distinct genre unto themselves. This is certainly a positive development in patristic scholarship. However, as Müller points out, scholars still largely fail to recognize the uniqueness of Augustine's body of sermons in light of the larger sermonic genre. She criticizes scholars for assuming that "whatever literary features set Augustine's preaching apart, these features arose necessarily, and unwittingly, from the situation he found himself in (and from earlier conventions)."[46] Far from being the product of tradition or his particular context, Müller claims, the unique features of Augustine's sermons should be appreciated as "conscious and independent literary decision[s]."[47] She points out that a careful reading of Augustine's sermons shows that

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[44] See Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: the Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

[45] Michael Cameron, "*Totus Christus* and the Psychogogy of Augustine's Sermons," *AugStud* 36 (2005), 60. He quotes Averil Cameron, *Rhetoric*, 79.

[46] Müller, "Preacher," 305.

[47] Müller, "Preacher," 305.

they are not simply a bunch of different rhetorical performances lumped together into an

"amorphous mass" that fits loosely within the established sermonic form. Rather, they should be

seen as a unified body that is "remarkably consistent in style and form."[48] This consistency

suggests that Augustine's sermons bear the marks of his unique strategy and aims. Therefore,

Müller reminds us that it is important to recognize that Augustine's sermons belong to an

established genre, but also contain elements that appear to be unique to him.

Of particular value for this study is the prominence of Augustine's concern throughout

his sermons for the spiritual health of his audience. His primary aim as a preacher was not

polemical or apologetic; rather, he sought, first and foremost, to preach as "a concerned and

solicitous pastor" (*solliciti pastoris*).[49] He wants his congregation to make spiritual progress. In

two sermons, *serm*. 352 and *serm*. 353, we are offered a particularly clear snapshot into how he

understands the stages of spiritual progress which he sought to guide his congregation through.

In *serm*. 352, Augustine preaches on a "threefold consideration of repentance," based on two

primary stages in his congregation's spiritual journey.[50] First, he says that there is naturally a

kind of repentance proper to catechumens who are seeking baptism, for "Nobody . . . can

approach Christ's baptism, in which all sins are blotted out, in the right frame of mind without

repenting of their old way of life."[51] Through their repentance, he asserts, they "in desire

conceive the new self that is to be born."[52] The second and third kinds of repentance belong to

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[48] Müller, "Preacher," 301.

[49] *Serm*. 353.1 (PL 39 1560; Hill, 10:152).

[50] *Serm*. 352.2 (PL 39 1550; Hill, 10:137): *triplex autem consideratio agendae poenitentiae in sacra scriptura inuenitur.*

[51] *Serm*. 352.2 (PL 39 1550; Hill, 10:137): *nam neque ad baptismum christi, in quo omnia peccata delentur, quisquam bene accedit, nisi agendo poenitentiam de uita pristina.*

[52] *Serm*. 352.2 (PL 39 1551; Hill, 10:138): *nouum hominem nasciturum iam uoto concipiant.*

those who have already been born into the Church through baptism, and thus belong to a further

stage of spiritual progress: the one is a daily repentance through prayer, and the other is the

repentance of the penitent.[53] Baptism, then, divides the two primary stages of the spiritual

maturation process, each of which has their proper modes of repentance. However, in *serm.* 353,

we learn that there is a further division among those who have received baptism. Upon baptism,

he comments, one goes through a time of "holy infancy" (*sanctae . . . infantiae*) and "harmless

innocence" (*innocentiam*), in which one's identity must be firmly grounded and secured in the

faith before being counted among the faithful.[54] These, then, are the three stages observable in

Augustine's understanding of the spiritual maturation process: to the first stage belong the

catechumens who are being guided toward baptism; the next stage is comprised of the neophytes,

who are subject to an initial period of identity formation; and, finally, the faithful represent those

in the third stage, who continue to "make good progress" (*bene . . . proficiatis*) in their spiritual

understanding.[55] This structure is significant because it reveals that Augustine thought about

preaching to his congregation in terms of their stage of spiritual maturity.[56] In fact, he states that

it is his role as a paster to know where the members of his congregation are within the process of

spiritual maturation and to communicate to them appropriately.[57] This being the case, I have

chosen to structure the present study around these three progressive stages as well. I maintain

that, by examining in greater detail his sermons preached to these specific groups, a distinct

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[53] *Serm.* 352.7-8.

[54] *Serm.* 353.1 (PL 39 1560; Hill, 10:152).

[55] *Serm.* 352.3 (PL 39 1551; Hill, 10:139).

[56] It is important to note that this same three-fold structure of the maturation process recurs in an explicit form in *serm.* 392.

[57] *Serm.* 368.4.

pattern emerges, revealing the strategy through which he guides his congregation into spiritual maturity through a progressively deeper spiritual reading of Scripture.

Chapter Outline

By looking at how Augustine communicates Scripture to his congregation in his sermons, I will make the case that the rhetorical notion of *narratio*, which had developed into an important and malleable term, provided Augustine with the framework in which to interpret the divine strategy of lifting the temporally conditioned minds of human beings to the contemplation of eternal reality. More particularly, *narratio*, I maintain, allows him to chart a progressive developmental exegetical path, guiding his congregants from their time in the catechumenate, through their formation as neophytes, to their life among the faithful. In this study, then, I follow Peter Sanlon's conviction that "to appreciate his [Augustine's] doctrine of Scripture, we must spend time observing how he actually used it in preaching."[58] How he uses Scripture as the guide by which his congregants ascend to contemplate immaterial realty reveals an important—indeed, central—aspect of his theology of Scripture.

This thesis is structured around four core chapters, in addition to the present introductory chapter and the final concluding chapter. Each of the four core chapters advances my argument in a particular way. Chapter 2 sets the stage for the rest of the thesis by addressing the main philosophical and theological question that Augustine's theology of Scripture must be viewed in light of, as well as introducing *narratio* as the means by which he is able to answer that question. I, therefore, begin the chapter by outlining the question at the heart of Augustine's theology of Scripture: how can the transcendent, eternal God can be known by finite and temporally-bound

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[58] Sanlon, *Augustine's*, 91.

human minds? I then spend the remainder of the chapter proposing that the rhetorical notion of *narratio* provides Augustine with a ready-made tool by which he can make sense of Scripture's temporal language as a faithful guide into the contemplation of eternal reality. To do this, I turn to discuss the development of the term *narratio* in the Latin rhetorical tradition and I argue that it increased in importance for constructing and interpreting communicative works over time and came to have a number of different applications. I then observe how Augustine draws on the expanded significance of *narratio* to make sense of the divine communicative strategy he finds at work in Scripture by looking at his sign theory in *De docrtina christiana*, specific elements of his own reading practice, and, finally, how this shapes what he teaches the role of the preacher is. Throughout this chapter, I suggest, *narratio* proves to play a pivotal role in Augustine's reading and application of Scripture.

In the next three chapters, I examine how Augustine makes use of a different aspect of *narratio* to those at each of the three progressive stages of spiritual maturation—the catechumens, the neophytes, and the faithful. I begin in Chapter 3 by looking at how he applies Scripture to the catechumens. Here, I claim, Augustine makes use of Scripture in a descriptive sense, that is, in manner akin to the way *narratio* functions in a judicial oration. I begin by looking at *De catechizandis rudibus*, where Augustine is explicitly constructing a *narratio* of Scripture for those inquiring into the Catholic faith. Upon a close reading, I argue, Augustine's *narratio* possesses all the key characteristics of a *narratio* in a judicial speech, but I also note that it does not constitute a complete oration. Therefore, I turn to the only other place where Augustine addresses the catechumens directly—his sermons to the *competentes*—and I suggest that, when these sermons are understood to constitute the *confirmatio* of his case, his strategy in *De catechizandis rudibus* is further confirmed. This reveals a distinct use of Scripture to those at

the initial stage of their spiritual journeys intended to convince them of the character of the Catholic Church.

In Chapter 4 I look at Augustine's sermons to the neophytes and I note that his unique approach to preaching during the Easter Octave is attributable to is adaptation of the deliberative speech genre. Here, I argue, he makes use of Scripture in proscriptive and prescriptive senses, in order to instill in the neophytes the ethical implications of their new Christian identity. To do this, he uses Scripture as a future-oriented *narratio* into which his audience must include themselves and so determine how they ought to live. This, I claim, is the same sort of pattern commonly found in deliberative oratory. Augustine, therefore, adapts the deliberative genre to bring out the second layer of the scriptural *narratio*.

Finally, in Chapter 5 I consider Augustine's sermons to the faithful. Here I observe that a distinct shift in style takes place, in which Augustine's sermons become more dialogical in style. This, I claim, is the result of his reliance on the dialectical principles embedded within rhetoric in general, and *narratio* in particular. This marks the final stage along the trajectory I trace in this study, for in it the faithful are led beyond the temporal language and material images of the *narratio* to the contemplation of eternal reality, which is the goal all along.

In the last place, as with any study, certain limitations and details have to be set out. First, as I cannot possibly do justice to Augustine's entire corpus of sermons in the course of a single thesis, I must justify some of the choices of inclusion and exclusion I have made. In keeping with my overall argument, I have chosen to focus my attention primarily on those sermons of Augustine's which address audiences at each of the three progressive stages of the spiritual maturation process. In other words, I have made decisions on which sermons to include and which to mention only briefly or pass over entirely based on the primary audience Augustine

addresses, rather than on chronology or on the presence of particular theological themes. Second, I should make a note about translation. I have followed the WSA translation of the *Sermones* by Edmond Hill quite closely throughout, though at times I have felt it necessary to modify it. The same is true for Raymond Canning's translation of *De catechizandis rudibus*. When it comes to *De doctrina Christiana*, however, I have followed more closely the NPNF translation, since it offers a more accurate rendering of some of the technical terms Augustine employs. For each of these works, there were also times where I felt it best to provide my own translation. Thus, where no English translation is cited, the translation is my own.

2
NARRATIO, TIME, AND ETERNITY

This chapter sets the context out of which the rest of this study grows by identifying the key principles undergirding Augustine's perspective on Scripture. The most fundamental of these principles is the challenge humanity faces in coming to know anything about God. After all, how can finite human minds comprehend the transcendent God? This question, I suggest, lies at the heart of Augustine's rumination on the character of Scripture, and it is in the way he solves this challenge that his spiritual theology of Scripture can be appreciated. In this chapter, I argue that Augustine appropriates the rhetorical notion of *narratio* in order to overcome the limitations of temporal existence and make sense of Scripture's mysterious, spiritual character. In particular, I aim to show that it is *narratio*'s unique ability to use temporal sequence to lift the hearts and minds of its readers beyond the confines of space and time that makes it a key feature of Augustine's theology of Scripture. Through *narratio* the limits of temporal existence become the very means of transcending time itself.

This chapter consists of six main sections. I begin by briefly considering how Augustine speaks about the relationship between time and eternity in his *Sermones*, for this is the context, I maintain, in which his theology of Scripture must be viewed. Thus, from the outset the challenge humanity faces in coming to know God is set squarely as the backdrop for the rest of this chapter. In the next two sections, I turn to examine *narratio* as it functioned in the Latin rhetorical tradition, which, I claim, is the central feature in Augustine's resolution of humanity's challenge. I trace the development of its increasing significance over time, and I also identify some of its unique features and resulting applications. Having then established the sense of *narratio* that Augustine would have been familiar with through his rhetorical training, I consider

in the next three sections how this sense of *narratio* shapes Augustine's view and use of Scripture by looking at how he understands the strategy of Scripture in his *De doctrina christiana*, as well as what this means for his own reading practice and for how he casts the role of the preacher. By showing that *narratio* serves as a ready-made tool by which Augustine is able to appreciate the harmony of God's temporal self-disclosure and thereby catch a glimpse of who God is in eternity, this chapter sets the foundation on which the subsequent chapters will be built.[1]

Time and Eternity

One of the fundamental faultlines running through the entirety of Augustine's written corpus is the absolute distinction he makes between time and eternity, between creation and Creator.[2] Only God, he consistently maintains, is eternal and self-subsistent, while all creation is temporal and dependent on God for existence.[3] He is acutely aware that humanity, along with the rest of creation, does not possess eternity, immutability, or incorruptibility, as God does, but instead is characterized by temporality, and therefore by mutability and corruptibility as well. Augustine reminds his congregation time and time again throughout his sermons of this ontological chasm that separates temporally conditioned creation from the eternal Creator. This is the lesson we learn from Exodus 3:14, he explains, where God reveals himself to Moses as the "I am." He

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[1] It has been well noted that Augustine came to see Scripture as a divine oration. Thus he can refer to the *eloquia divina* in *ep.* 82.5. See Michael Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere: Augustine's Early Figurative Exegesis* (New York: Oxford University Press), 26-27. See also, "Ethics," in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Alan Fitzgerald and John Cavadini (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 328.

[2] The most famous example of his thought on eternity and time is his meditation on time in *Conf.* 11.

[3] For a detailed study of Augustine's ontology, see James F. Anderson, *Augustine and Being: A Metaphysical Essay* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1965). See also, Dominique Dubarle, "Essai sur l'ontologie théologale de saint Augustin," *RechAug* 16 (1981): 197-288.

states in *serm*. 7 that "'Is' (*esse*) is a name for the unchanging. . . . What is 'I am who am' if not 'I am eternal'? What is 'I am who am' if not 'who cannot change'?"[4] Similarly, he comments in *serm*. 229E that in this name God reveals himself as the "true is," the "genuine is," the 'is' that "can never and nowhere be changed."[5] Human existence, on the other hand, stands in stark contrast to God's eternity. While God is stable and eternal, human life is "fleeting" (*transitoria*) and "practically non-existent" (*pene nulla*) when compared to eternity.[6] The eternal life of God (*esse*) is so radically distinct from and superior to the temporal life of created beings, he holds, that "whatever else there is, in comparison with him [God] is not."[7]

As a consequence of his commitment to this ontological gulf between Creator and creation, Augustine is eager to impress on his audience the fact that human beings cannot know God as *esse*. In *serm*. 223A, Augustine challenges his congregation to try and contemplate God in eternity, saying: "Contemplate, if you can, *I am who am*. Don't roll around and revolve like wheels, don't be driven by revolving, temporal thoughts. Stand still at *is*, stand still at just *is*."[8] But, Augustine points out, human beings are subject to time and cannot comprehend eternity, since "unchangeableness" (*incommutabilitas*) cannot be understood by minds conditioned by the vicissitudes of time.[9] This means that for the human mind to comprehend the divine essence by

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[4] *Serm*. 7.7 (CCSL 41 75; Hill, 1:237): *esse, nomen est incommutabilitatis . . . . quid est, ergo sum qui sum, nisi, aeternus sum? quid est, ergo sum qui sum, nisi mutari non possum?*

[5] *Serm*. 293E.2 (MA 1 247; Hill, 8:178): *ubi dicitur, est, germanum est, sincerum est; mutari numquam et nusquam potest. hoc deus, hoc filius dei, hoc spiritus sanctus.*

[6] *Serm*. 302.7 (SPM 1 104). Cf. *serm*. 264.2.

[7] *Serm*. 223A.5 (MA 1 16; Hill, 6:209): *quicquid aliud est in illius comparatione nec est*. Cf. *serm*. 156.6.

[8] *Serm*. 223A.5 (MA 1 16; Hill, 6:209): *cogitate, si potestis, ego sum qui sum. nolite uoluntatibus uolui, nolite uoluntariis et temporalibus cogitationibus agitari. state ad est, state ad ipsum est.*

[9] *Serm*. 6.4 (CCSL 41 63): *quod enim est, manet. quod autem mutatur, fuit aliquid,et aliquid erit: non tamen est, quia mutabile est. ergo incommutabilitas dei isto uocabulo se dignata est intimare, ego sum qui sum.*

its own effort is impossible. He tells the faithful in his congregation that to think one can

understand who God is in himself as the "I am who am" (*ego sum qui sum*)[10] is a serious error,

for it is to think that *est* or *idipsum* can be comprehended.[11] However, nothing could be further

from the truth, he says. It is impossible for human minds to comprehend or even contemplate the

eternal divine essence, he maintains, because temporal creatures cannot even comprehend how

vastly different temporal existence is from eternity.[12]

      Nevertheless, even though God's essence is beyond comprehension, Augustine still

admonishes his parishioners to continue to press on and make progress toward the vision of God

anyway.[13] Augustine is certainly aware that a sustained and complete vision of God in the

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[10] Exodus 3:14-15, where God reveals himself as "I am who am" to Moses, was a mainstay of Augustine's thought on divine revelation, Scripture, and the essence of God throughout his life. The classic work on this passage in his thought remains Emilie Zum Brunn, *St. Augustine: Being and Nothingness* (New York: Paragon, 1988), esp. 97-119. According to Zum Brunn's count, there are 47 instances where Augustine discusses this Exodus passage directly, eight of which she finds among his *Sermones*. To this list must be added *serm.* 162C.6 and *serm.* 341.17, both of which have been discovered after Zum Brunn's list was published. See Zum Brunn, *Being*, 119. It is worth noting that the extent to which Augustine relies on this passage, especially in connection with his reading of the rest of Scripture, is unique when compared to the preceding patristic tradition. Zum Brunn, *Being*,110. Furthermore, his interpretation of this passage remains remarkably consistent throughout his life, as primarily revealing God's eternal and unchanging essence. See Roland Teske, *To Know God and the Soul: Essays on the Thought of St. Augustine* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 123, who points out that "if there is one aspect of content that Augustine returns to again and again in dealing with the Exodus text, it is divine immutability and eternity." Similarly, Zum Brunn comments that, regardless of the context in which Augustine discusses this passage, it "does not change in any way the meaning Augustine, from the *De uerareligione* up to his last writings, reads into the Name revealed to Moses," which is a demonstration of "the contrast between the Immutable and change." Zum Brunn, *Being*, 104. Cf. *serm.* 6.3.4; *serm.* 7.7; *serm.* 223A.5; *sol.* 6.3.4 and 7.7.

[11] James Swetnam has rightfully pointed out that *idipsum* was a particularly important expression for God in Augustine's thought, for it emphasizes a number of key divine attributes that Augustine often turned to Exod. 3:14 to discuss: simplicity, unity, immutability, eternity. James Swetnam, "A Note on *idipsum* in St. Augustine," *Modern Schoolman* 30 (1953): 328-31; 328. For an argument that Augustine's use of *idipsum* as a name for God is apophatic and so not properly a name at all, see Jean-Luc Marion, "*Idipsum*: The Name of God According to Augustine," in *Orthodox Readings of Augustine*, ed. G. E. Demacopoulos and A. Papanikolaou (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2008), 167-90. Marion suggests that Augustine does not anticipate any ontological naming of God. In his view, *idipsum* is a term used by Augustine to designate the radical difference between humanity's existence and God's existence, but, because of its apophatic character, it cannot be a name for God. However, as Roland Teske has pointed out, while it is certainly true that Augustine did not take the name God gives Moses to be a proper name in the sense that Marcus Tullius Cicero is a proper name, it is a description that applies only to God and is, therefore, a name—not with a connotative meaning, but with a denotative meaning. See Teske, *Know God*, 123.

[12] *Serm.* 52.2; *serm.* 117.

[13] See *serm.* 261.2; *serm.* 365.

present life is impossible because of humanity's temporal state, but he also knows that the Christian life should be shaped by the desire to attain that vision. Even Moses caught only a fleeting glimpse of God, he points out, but in that glimpse the desire for a sustained vision of eternity was enkindled in his heart: "Having properly understood that which is and truly is, and having been struck however fleetingly, as by a flash of lightning, by even the slightest ray of light from the only true being . . . his desire to see that which is was kindled."[14] This desire, Augustine will say, is that which drove Paul too, who states that, despite working harder than anyone to achieve the vision of God, he still did not attain that vision in this life.[15] Therefore, Augustine admonishes his congregation to follow the example of Moses, and especially of Paul, the great "athelete of Christ's" (*athletae christi*),[16] by keeping in mind the Christian's goal of seeing God but, at the same time, always being aware of created nature's perpetual distance from that goal: "What you ought to do, you see, however much progress you are making, is not think about how much ground you have covered but about how much you still have left until you finish the journey."[17] The jouney he speaks of is, of course, a spiritual and intellectual one. Therefore, he encourages them to press on in an effort to "[p]ass on beyond what can be seen, pass on also beyond what cannot be seen, and yet change, in order to come to him who can neither be seen nor change. When you come to him, you will be coming to God."[18]

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[14] *Serm.* 7.7 (CCSL 41 75; Hill, 1.237): *qui enim hoc quod est et uere est digne intellexerit, et qualicumque lumine ueracissimae essentiae . . . inflammatus ipso desiderio uidendi quod est.*

[15] *Serm.* 261.3.

[16] *Serm.* 261.3 (SPM 1 89; Hill, 7:207).

[17] *Serm.* 16B.3 (CCSL 41 229; Hill, 1:364): *debes enim, quantumcumque profeceris, non attendere quantum transieris, sed quid tibi restet, dum nec finias uiam.*

[18] *Serm.* 301.8 (PL 38 1385; Hill, 8:287): *transi omne quod uidetur; transi et quod non uidetur, et tamen mutatur: ut uenias ad eum, qui nec uidetur, nec mutatur. cum ueneris ad eum, uenies ad deum.*

What is more, Augustine teaches those under his care at Hippo that the Christian life is not simply characterized by the *desire* to see God, but, more specifically, that one can make genuine progress toward the vision of God even within the constraints of temporal existence: "Seek his face always," he commends his audience, "Let nobody fall away in seeking, but instead make progress. You make progress by seeking, if it's seriousness seeking."[19] The ability to make progress toward the vision of God in the face of the absolute ontological gap between Creator and creation is only possible because of God's grace: "God" is the one, Augustine preaches, "who grants you understanding, who endows you with an eye; understanding to grasp things, an eye to observe them; to grasp what is the breadth and length of God's love, to observe the author and finisher of faith."[20]Any progress in this life toward the vision of God is only possible because of divine grace. Speaking of the centrality of grace for Augustine's thought in this respect, Carol Harrison observes that grace is "not something that suddenly becomes necessary because of hman sinfulness, but is part of what defines the relation of Creator and creature."[21] In other words, humanity's need for grace is bound up with Augustine's ontology. Emilie Zum Brunn has similarly noted that at the core of Augustine's thought is an ontology that is dynamic and "spiritual," and which revolves around his awareness of "the growth and reduction of the soul (*magis esse* and *minus esse*)."[22] The relationship between Creator and creature, she argues, is at the heart of Augustine's conception of reality, and this relationship is

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[19] *Serm.* 261.2 (SPM 1 89; Hill, 7:207): *quaerite faciem eius semper . . . . nemo quaerendo deficiat, sed proficiat. proficit quaerens, si pietas quaerat, non uanitas.*

[20] *Serm.* 365.1 (PL 39 1643; Hill, 10:283): *lauda Deum tuum, qui tribuit tibi intellectum, qui praestat oculum: intellectum, ut capias; oculum, ut aspicias; capias quanta sit latitudo et longitudo amoris Dei, aspicias in auctorem et consummatorem fidei.* Cf. *serm.* 231.1.

[21] Carol Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 92.

[22] Zum Brunn, *Being*, 91, 1.

one sustained by divine grace. Augustine's most basic understanding of human existence, therefore, not only includes an acute recognition of the ontological chasm between Creator and creature, but also a robust sense of humanity's ontological need for grace. Coming to know God by overcoming that chasm—something that is only possible by divine grace—is the veritable telos of human life in general and of the Christian life in particular.

Augustine's theology of Scripture, I suggest, must be viewed within this ontological matrix. For Augustine, Scripture is one of the central features of divine grace, for it provides a way for humanity to bridge the ontological chasm between the eternal God and temporal creation.[23] It is the means that God has specifically ordained for the purpose of leading humanity to himself.[24] Scripture opens up a way for humanity to begin to contemplate God as the "I am," for it stands at the crossroads of eternity and time, of transcendence and immanence. When understood properly, it becomes the means by which the members of Christ's body here on earth ascend so as to be able to contemplate who God is in eternity. To explain Scripture's role at this paradoxical intersection, Augustine was fond of reminding his congregation that when God revealed himself to Moses as the "I am who am," he also revealed himself by "another name" (*aliud nomen*), which he accommodated to the human temporal condition: "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."[25] God knew Moses could never grasp him as he is in his eternal essence, and so he revealed himself in terms Moses could understand—as the God who acts in and through time. It is in the same way that God reveals himself through Scripture, Augustine contends; just as Moses learned who God is through his activity in history, what

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[23] See *serm.* 12.5.

[24] *Serm.* 199.2. In this sermon, Augustine asks the question, why are we not led to God by way of material objects in the same way the magi were led to Christ in the manger? He answers that, for people living today, God wants to be known through Scripture.

[25] See *serm.* 6.5; *serm.* 7.7; *serm.* 223A.5; *serm.* 229T.

Augustine calls God's "name of mercy" (*nomen misericordiae*), so also we learn who God is

through this same name of mercy revealed throughout Scripture.[26] For Augustine, one must read

the language of Scripture as God's accommodation to the temporal human condition as that

"which the little ones can make sense of" (*quod possunt paruuli retinere*) while living in time.[27]

God's merciful accommodation is the only reason human beings can say anything about him at

all.[28] Augustine likens the difference between who God is in himself and who he is in his name

of mercy to the difference between the mind of a speaker and the words that speaker utters. He

explains to his congregation: "[T]he voice in which your mind appears when you speak is not the

substance of your mind," which means that "mind is one thing and voice another, and yet mind

becomes apparent in a thing which it in itself is not."[29] Therefore, even though mind and voice

are distinct from one another, the former is made present through the latter. In a similar way, just

as the voice is a reliable vehicle for communicating the substance of the speaker's mind, so also

God's temporal revelation through Scripture is a reliable guide to the contemplation of his

eternal essence. We know this, Augustine teaches, because God says of his *nomen misericordiae*:

"This is my name forever" (Exod. 3:15).[30]

Exodus 3:14-15, therefore, serves as a paradigm for Augustine's understanding of

Scripture. In this passage, he tells his congregation, is found a summary of all the divine

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[26] *Serm*. 7.7 (CCSL 41 75): *cum ergo sit hoc nomen aeternitatis, plus est quod dignatus est habere nomen misericordiae.*

[27] *Serm*. 229T (RB 79 210; Hill, 6:320).

[28] *Serm.* 377.1.

[29] *Serm*. 7.4 (CCSL 41 72; Hill, 1:235): *uox in qua apparet anima tua cum loqueris non est substantia animae tuae, aliud est illa, aliud est uox, et tamen apparet et in ea re quae ipsa non est.*

[30] *Serm.* 223A.5.

mysteries contained in Scripture.[31] It teaches both that God is beyond all human comprehension and that he has condescended to our level, thereby providing a way for us to mount up and see him as he is. Scripture plays a special role in this process, for in it we find temporal language accommodated to the human condition.[32] Through the ongoing process of reading Scripture, Augustine explains, God "nurses us along during the night" of history in which we live "so that we may proceed to the day" of eternity where we will see him as he is.[33] Scripture's unique spiritual role, then, is in guiding its readers into the vision of the transcendent God that is genuine, even if partial in this life. It is the fundamental conviction that God has given humanity a way to mount up to contemplate who he is, I maintain, framed by the distinction between time and eternity, that undergirds Augustine's theology of Scripture as a whole and, as we will see, is also the reason why *narratio* becomes such an important tool for him when reading and preaching Scripture.

Narratio in Antiquity

Having established the fundamental question at the heart of Augustine's theology of Scripture, we are now in a position to shift our focus and begin to analyze one of the most important tools

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[31] *Serm.* 7.1.

[32] *Serm.* 302.1.

[33] *Serm.* 229T (RB 79 210; Hill, 6:320): *nutrit in nocte, ut procedamus in diem*. There is a clear association in Augustine's thought between the revelation of God in Exod. 3:14-15, his revelation in the Incarnation, and his revelation through the whole of Scripture. In *serm.*6, he asks what it means for God to have two names, the one eternal and the other temporal. He answers, "It means that while God is indeed unchangeable, he has done everything out of mercy, and so the Son of God himself was prepared to take on changeable flesh and thereby to come to man's rescue while remaining what he is as the Word of God." *Serm.* 6.5 (CCSL 41 64; Hill, 1:229): *quia quomodo est deus incommutabilis, fecit omnia per misericordiam, et dignatus est ipse filius dei mutabilem carnem suscipiendo, manens id quod uerbum dei est, uenire et subuenire homini.* In *serm.* 341.10 (PL 39 1496), he links this principle to the interpretation of Scripture, and he explicitly refers to Exodus 3:14-15 as a paradigm for interpreting it: *secundum quod dictum est: ego sum qui sum, et secundum quod dictum est: ego sum deus Abraham et deus Isaac et deus Iacob; sic tenebitis et quod in eius natura est, et quod in eius misericordia.*

he used to make sense of Scripture's unique character: the rhetorical notion of *narratio. Narratio* in the context of the Latin rhetorical tradition is most often translated into English as the statement of 'the facts of the case'. However, this translation captures only part of the meaning *narratio* came to carry in antiquity. In actual fact, *narratio* was a broad and malleable term, carrying with it a cluster of defining features and applications. However, two senses stand out above all: one could be termed its technical sense and the other its broad sense. In its technical sense, *narratio* refers to the second of the six traditional parts of a speech, in which it functions as the statement of 'the facts of the case'.[34] The *narratio* would occur immediately after the introduction (*exordium*) and, therefore, served to set the context for the main argument of the speech (*confirmatio*). It first appears in Latin as a cognate of the Greek, *diegesis* (διήγησις), in this technical sense.[35] However, upon its introduction into the Lain tradition, *narratio* underwent a certain expansion in which it increased in importance for constructing and interpreting both oral and literary works. Thus, long before Augustine receives his rhetorical training, *narratio*'s second sense had also come to exercise an important influence on rhetorical thinking. Through Cicero, and then especially in Quintilian, *narratio* came to function as more than the part of a

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[34] There were six standard parts to a well-crafted classical oration: 1) the *exordium*, in which one announces the subject of the speech; 2) the *narratio*, where the 'facts' to be discussed in the rest of the speech are rehearsed; 3) the *partitio*, wherein one summarizes what has been said and outlines the argument that will follow; 4) the *confirmatio* (or sometimes *argumentatio*), the main body of the speech, in which one provides the logical proofs of the argument being made; 5) the *refutatio*, where one answers the counter arguments of one's opponent; 6) the *peroratio*, where one concludes the case being made and makes a final appeal to the audience. This six-part structure is an elaboration of the basic four-part judicial structure commonly found in Greek rhetorical manuals (*prooimion, diegesis, pistis, epiologos*). The three main genres in a classical rhetoric—juridical, deliberative, and epideictic—each employed *narratio* in this technical sense as the part of the speech which outlines 'the facts of the case'. However, it was particularly associated with the judicial genre, since a clear statement of facts is most obviously required in order for one to expound one's case.

[35] *Diegesis*, the Greek etymological ancestor of *narratio*, was adopted by the sophists to define that part of a rhetorical speech that immediately preceded the main argument. Exactly when *diegesis* began to be used in this sense remains unknown. In the *Phaedrus* (4th century B.C.E.), Plato lists *diegesis* as one of the parts of a speech outlined in the technical rhetorical manuals, so it seems it was commonplace by that time. The function of this part of speech was to summarize, or "digest" the facts relevant to the deciding matter (*pragma*) in a dispute. When the rhetorical handbooks were translated into Latin, this part of speech was called *narratio*.

speech which provides the *context* for one's argument; it became an integral part of the *substance* of one's argument as well. Though it never ceases to be used in its technical sense as the statement of the facts under consideration, it is especially instructive to observe how its broad meaning expands and gains importance in the Latin rhetorical tradition.

Aristotle proves to be important for tracing the developing use of *narratio* because of his critical assessment of the Greek *diegesis*. Two terms carry particular significance for Aristotle's appraisal of *diegesis*. The first is *muthos* (μῦθος), the word he uses in a sense most closely resembling the meaning of the English word "plot." The second is *mimesis* (μίμησις), which he uses to speak of imitation of actions or events.[36] For Aristotle, these two concepts determine the quality of a *diegesis*. Where they are present, the *diegesis* is strong; where they are lacking, the *diegesis* is weak. In his view, only the weakest works "merely narrate," while the "greater" works "imitate a unity" of actions and events in all their particulars based on a thematic and organic conception of plot and meaning.[37] For him, the practice of merely chronicling events can only be considered *diegesis* in a very weak form, since it lacks both *muthos* and *mimesis*.[38] While the sequencing of events remains a central characteristic of *diegesis*, Aristotle held that the mark of a great *diegesis* is that it is governed by a logical ordering of the parts (*muthos*) around a

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[36] For an introductory outline of Aristotle's view of *narratio*, see John O'Banion, *Reorienting Rhetoric: The Dialectic of List and Story* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 41-56.

[37] This is why Aristotle says that the greatest tool is metaphor, because "the right use of metaphor means an eye for resemblances." *Poet.* 1459b 1; cf. 1451a 1–1452a1 3. See, C. Jan Swearingen, "The Narration of Dialogue and Narration Within Dialogue: The Transition from Story to Logic" in *Narrative Thought and Narrative Language*, ed. Bruce K. Britton and Anthony D. Pellegrini (New York: Psychology Press, 1990), 173-197; esp. 182-185.

[38] Aristotle offers an example of this at work in his evaluation of Homer. In the *Iliad*, Homer weaves together a series of dialogues and actions, comprised of various agents, settings, outcomes and judgements. The narration is neither temporally nor causally ordered. Instead there is a thematic unity centred around the opening invocation: "Sing, Goddess, the anger of Peleus' son, Achilleus." However, because this theme is not developed sequentially or logically, Aristotle agrees with the Pre-Platonists that there is no unity of plot (*muthos*) in Homer. *Poet.* 1459b 3-1460b 1.

central theme, and so has all the parts working together in imitation (*mimesis*) of perfect unity.[39]

There should be a harmony in a *diegesis* that reflects the unity of the author's intended meaning.

This is important because it shows that, not only is there already in Aristotle a continuum on

which *diegesis* is measured, but that he recognizes the importance it can have beyond merely

setting the context for an argument as well. He recognizes that there is an art to crafting a

diegesis in which the parts should relate to one another in such a way as to create a meaningful

whole.

Aristotle's assessment of *diegesis* serves as a precursor to the way *narratio* is eventually

used in the Latin tradition. His insistence that the better forms of *diegesis* contribute to one's

argument by uniting various characters and events around a single, unifying theme is taken up

and expanded upon by both Cicero and Quintilian.[40] By holding that *diegesis* should be governed

by the order of logic, rather than strictly by chronology, he paved the way for the further step of

recognizing it as an essential part of the argument being made. Though he himself did not take

this step, those in the Latin tradition did. As *narratio* developed in the Latin tradition, therefore,

it came to occupy a more prominent place in the construction and interpretation of oral and

literary works. Its increased importance is evidenced by the fact that Cicero's *De oratore* and

Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* each devote over 40 pages to discussing *narratio*, while

Aristotle's *Rhetoric* only contains roughly 4 pages dedicated to *diegesis*.[41]

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[39] For this reason, Aristotle distinguished sharply between history and poetry, and he favoured poetry as the vehicle for truth in *Poet.* 1452a 10-1452b 10. Quintilian, however, will say that history "is very close to poetry and is rather like a poem in prose." *Inst.* 10.1.31. The debate over the proper relationship between history and poetry was a longstanding one in the classical world. For an excellent outline see, Timothy Peter Wiseman*, Clio's Cosmetics: Three Studies in Greco-Roman Literature* (Leicester University Press, 1979), 143-53.

[40] See Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric: A Foundation for Literary Rhetoric*, ed. David E. Orton and R. Dean Anderson (Leiden: Brill, 1998), § 289.

[41] This is pointed out in O'Banion, *Reorienting*, 58.

The growing importance of *narratio*, beginning in Cicero, reveals some very important

shifting nuances in its meaning. Within his discussion of *narratio*, Cicero makes an important

distinction between narratives belonging to speeches which address public issues and those

"written solely for amusement."[42] In this latter group, we find a very broad application of

narratio at work. He lists many of the forms of literary and imaginary narrative, including

"narratives concerned with events," such as *fabula*, *historia*, and *argumentum*.[43] This is

significant because it marks the first time that the imaginary, historical and argumentative are

each classified as subsets of *narratio*.[44] It is especially noteworthy that *argumentum* is included

here, since *confirmatio* (or *argumentatio*) was traditionally the part of speech associated with

argument. Aristotle had maintained unequivocally, "A speech has two [main] parts. Necessarily,

you state your case, and you prove it. Thus we cannot state a case and omit to prove it, or prove a

case without first stating it. . . . In Rhetoric we must call these two processes, respectively,

Statement and Argument."[45] For Aristotle, not only were the narrative and the argument

completely distinct parts of the speech, but each performed a prescribed function. However, by

including it under the rubric of *narratio*, Cicero gives *narratio* the power to convey the author's

argumentum by making clear the connections between characters, events, motives and

consequences. For this reason, Cicero says that *narratio* calls

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[42] *Inu.* 1.30. There were a number of different kinds of *narratio* listed in both the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and in Cicero's *De inuentione*. *Rhet. Her.* identifies *narratio* present in deliberative, judicial, and epideictic speeches. Cicero adds further nuance in his discussion, when he lists narratives which give a reason for a dispute, those which constitute a digression, and those which are unconnected with public issues, including *fabula*, *historia*, and *argumentum*. *Inu.*1.19.

[43] *Inu.*1.19.

[44] In fact, Aristotle explicitly excludes the imaginary from *narratio*, saying that the role of *diegesis* within an oration is limited only to recounting events from the past in a forensic speech. The imaginary, he says, belongs to poetry. See *Rhet.* 1414a 6ff.

[45] *Rhet.* 1414a 6.

not only for a statement of what was done or said, but also for the manner of doing or saying it; and, in the estimate of consequences, for an exposition of all contributory causes, whether originating in accident, discretion or foolhardiness; and as for the individual actors, besides an account of their exploits, it demands particulars of the lives and characters of such as are outstanding in renown and dignity.[46]

Narratio has an inherent logic all its own, Cicero claims, by which it makes these important connections, and so constitutes an argument, even if they are not immediately apparent on the surface.[47] In fact, Cicero indicates that the power of persuasion produced by this inherent logic is superior to the logical argument found in the *confirmatio*. Thus he claims that *narratio* is "the fountainhead"[48] which serves to "open up the sources from which the whole argument for every case and speech is derived."[49]

While Cicero certainly affords *narratio* a more significant role in the art of communication, it is in Quintilian that we find many of the latent Ciceronian themes expounded on in greater detail. In Quintilian, *narratio* becomes such an expansive term that it can be used to speak of the proper mode of rhetorical thinking itself.[50] This is reflected most clearly in his educational programme, in which he maintains that, from the outset, a student should be exposed to well-crafted literary narratives as a means of learning to think rhetorically. He thinks it best for the *grammatici* not to belabour the rules of grammar, but to turn to the study of literature as soon as the student is able to read and write.[51] By studying literature, students learn to probe

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[46] This he applies to any writing or speech dealing with persons or events. *Orat.* 2.15.63.

[47] *Orat.* 2.34.147; 2.39.166.

[48] *Orat.* 2.81.330.

[49] *Orat.* 2.30.130.

[50] Key for Quintilian's understanding of *narratio* was the principle of *dispositio*, or "arrangement." He likened the role of *dispositio* for *narratio* to the role of a general in war, strategically employing the use of every part in order to accomplish the objective. *Inst.* 1.10.13.

[51] *Inst.* 1.4.2.

beneath the surface of things, he claims, learning how the parts (dialogue, characters, and events) fit together into a whole.[52] In this way, the student is acquainted with what Quintilian calls "the most important department of rhetoric in actual practice."[53] Being acquainted with *narratio* gives one the precious tool of adaptability (*consilium*) by enabling a distinct mode of thinking that is conducive for constructing and interpreting oral and literary works.[54] Quintilian does not discount the importance of *narratio* in its technical sense, as the second part of a speech, but he does maintain that one must avoid rigid, rhetorical plans in favour of a rhetorical mode of thinking learned through acquaintance with narration (*narrationem*).[55] He goes so far as to say that training in the subtleties of formal logic is "trivial" compared with the art of situational application of rhetorical rules one learns when *narratio* shapes the way one thinks.[56]

It is in Quintilian, then, that we find two senses of *narratio* explicitly at work. He himself states that there are "two forms of statement of facts (*narratio*). . . the one expounding the facts of the case itself (*ipsius causae*), the other setting forth (*expositio*) facts which have a bearing (*pertinentim*) on the case."[57] In other words, there is a technical sense, in which *narratio* functions as the second part of speech, providing the context for one's argument, and there is

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[52] *Inst*. 1.4.2.

[53] *Inst*. 2.1.10. Quintilian says that if one tries to provide such an account, it results in "disconnected passages having nothing in common with each other" and therefore "necessarily lack cohesion." He describes an attempt to do just this as *congesta* ("piled up") *oratio* which "can only be compared to a schoolboy's notebook." *Inst*. 2.11.7.

[54] *Inst*. 2.13.2. Quintilian comments that, despite the value of such rules, they "are rarely of such a kind that their validity cannot be shaken and overthrown in some particular or other." He goes on to explain: "Rules are helpful all the same so long as they indicate the direct road and do not restrict us absolutely to the ruts made by others." *Inst*. 2.13.14, 16.

[55] *Inst*. 2.13.7.

[56] *Inst*. 1.10.5. This is not to say that he dismisses training in logic altogether, or training in the other standard arts, for that matter. He recognizes that "although they do not reveal or intrude themselves in actual speaking," they do "supply hidden forces (*occultam suggerunt*) and make their silent presence felt." *Inst*. 1.10.7.

[57] *Inst*. 4.2.11.

also a broad, or expanded, sense, in which *expositio* is included within *narratio*. One could say,

along with John O'Banion, that Quintilian views *narratio* as "a dialectic of fact and telling," or

"of causes and telling, of motives and telling, of situations and the explaining of them."[58]

Interestingly, the Latin texts of Quintilian which are often translated as the 'statement of facts'

include on occasion two terms, *expositioni narrantis*, hinting clearly at the two sides of *narratio*

in Quintilian's thought.[59] *Narratio*, for him, at once encompassed both the facts of the case

(*factae*) in summary statement, and also a persuasive exposition (*persuadendum expositio*) of the

nature of those facts.

The way these two senses of *narratio*—its technical sense and its broad sense—relate in

Quintilian is not always clear. Nevertheless, while Quintilian does seem to maintain a distinction

between them, he also sees in them a significant overlap. A particularly colourful example of the

interplay between these two senses is found in *Institutio oratoria* 2.4. In this passage, Quintilian

seems to follow the standard treatment of *narratio* in its technical sense when he says that its

purpose is to "indicate the nature of the subject (*iudice res*) on which he [the judge] will have to

give judgment (*pronuntiaturus*): that is the statement of facts (*narratio*)."[60] Yet, he goes on to

say that this kind of *narratio* is not essential for every speech, commenting that "the majority [of

teachers] regard the statement of facts (*narratio*) as being indispensable: but there are many

considerations which show this view is erroneous."[61] Then, after citing a number of instances

where *narratio* in its technical sense is not needed, he maintains further that a speech should

never lack *narratio* completely, for "If we make no statement, he [the judge] cannot help

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[58] O'Banion, *Reorienting,* 94.

[59] O'Banion makes this observation in *Reorienting*, 97. See, for example, *Inst.* 4.2.31.

[60] *Inst.* 4.2.1.

[61] *Inst.* 4.2.4.

believing that our opponent's assertions are correct and that their tone represents the truth."[62] *Narratio* plays such a fundamental role in the speech, he is saying, that without it the argument is incomplete. There appears to be a contradiction here: he says that *narratio* is both dispensable and indispensable. However, this tension is resolved when one realizes that Quintilian is working with two senses of *narratio* simultaneously in mind. In its technical sense, as the second part of a speech, it is not always necessary; however, this is only so because in its expanded sense, as the foundation of rhetorical thinking and the means of making one's case, it must always be present, for it provides the heart of the speech.[63] This is why he goes on to explain that *narratio* is not limited to one particular part of speech but should be found throughout all the other parts as well. Even the *confirmatio*, he claims, should bear the marks of narrative, for the arguments recited there should be "put forward in continuous form."[64]

From this brief survey, it should be clear that *narratio* came to function as an important tool for constructing and interpreting communicative works in antiquity. It came to extend beyond its technical definition of 'the facts of the case' and to carry a far more complex range of meanings. *Narratio*, as Augustine would have known it, then, cannot be reduced to that which provides the *context* for one's argument either; it is a much broader and more important notion which plays a significant role in the *argument* being made by the author as well. Thus, for Augustine, *narratio* was a ready-made tool to be used to refer to the strategic ordering of temporal events in order to convey an author's particular meaning. It is this sense of *narratio* that

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[62] *Inst.* 4.2.76.

[63] *Inst*. 4.2.76.

[64] *Inst*. 4.2.79.

developed in the Latin tradition, and which, we will see, carries deep significance for

Augustine's interpretation and application of Scripture.

Defining *Narratio*

However, before going on to discuss the role of *narratio* in Augustine's theology of Scripture

directly, it is important to examine in greater detail the central features that made it such a key

concept. That way, we will be able to trace the ways in which Augustine draws on *narratio* with

greater clarity and precision. It should already be clear that what is especially important for both

Cicero and Quintilian is the unique ability of *narratio* to construct a coherent argument by

making connections between characters, events, places, motives, causes and effects. For this

reason, it is an effective means of communicating one's *causa*, or aim; one does not have to

explicitly state one's argument, but rather arrange the events and characters in such a way that

the *relationships* between the various elements convey the author's intended meaning.[65] Through

narratio, there is a unity of meaning which is found by integrating seemingly disconnected

events, characters, and images in service of a single authorial goal. There are, then, two central

features of *narratio*, which stand out above the rest: temporal arrangement and authorial intent.

These two features, above all others, set *narratio* apart as the unique and effective tool for

communication that it came to be.

Temporal Arrangement

We have already noted how, beginning with Aristotle, it was widely recognized that *narratio*

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[65] *Inst*. 4.2.52-55

should not always simply follow a chronological sequence.[66] However, this does not mean that it

ignores chronology altogether. *Narratio*, by its very nature, is closely tied to temporality and

temporal sequence, though it is not bound by it. Temporality is an inherent part of its character,

for it is used to trace change through characters and events. Cicero claims that *narratio* "desires

chronological arrangement" (*rerum ratio ordinem temporum desiderat*).[67] It should come as no

surprise, then, that *narratio* came to be very closely related to the historian's task of recording

events from the past. Quintilian observes that recounting history is its most common

application.[68] Similarly, Cicero urges his readers to "see how great a responsibility the orator has

in historical writing," based on the unique character of *narratio*.[69] This responsibility entails a

keen attention to detail. He explains:

> [F]or we shall investigate connected terms, and general heads with their sub-divisions,
> and resemblances and differences, and opportunities, and corresponding and concurrent
> circumstances, and so-called antecedents, and contradictories, and we shall track down
> the causes of things, and the effects proceeding from causes, and investigate things of
> relatively greater, equal or lesser significance.[70]

When dealing with past events, Cicero teaches that it is *narratio* and its unique ability to draw a

coherent whole from disparate parts that proves to be the best vehicle for conveying meaning. It

is, therefore, significant that immediately prior to the above description of the task of the

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[66] Quintilian calls into question whether such a "bald statement of facts" is even possible. *Inst*. 2.4.3.

[67] *Orat*. 2.15.63.

[68] *Inst*. 4.2.3.

[69] *Orat*. 2.15.62. It is worth noting further that in *De Legibus*, written near the end of Cicero's life, there occurs a well-known passage in the dialogue where Atticus tries to persuade Cicero to write history: "You will of course do justice to the genre, since it's a task which is singularly well suited to an orator – or so it has always seemed to you at least" (*Leg*. 1.5): *potes autem tu profecto satis facere in ea, quippe cum sit opus, ut tibi quidem uideri solet, unum hoc oratorium maxime* (quoted in and translated by A. J. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography* [Portland, OR: Areopagitica Press, 1988], 98). Woodman remarks that this passage seems to highlight the uniqueness of Cicero's view in this respect, since "more than forty years after [*De oratore* was written], most men were still not accustomed to seeing historiography as 'a task which is singularly well suited to an orator." Woodman, *Rhetoric*, 99.

[70] *Orat*. 2.39.166.

narrator, Cicero comments that each of these investigations yield "arguments" (*argumenta*).[71]

However, constructing a compelling historical account in this way is no easy task. A. J.

Woodman has observed that, for Cicero, in contrast to those who came before him, history is

seen "in metaphorical terms as a building consisting of foundations (*fundamenta*) and

superstructure (*exaedificatio*), which are expressly contrasted with each other (*scilicet . . .*

autem)."[72] Well-written history should always be an artful creation that consists of layers, which

unfold as one progresses through the narrative, in order to convey the specific *intentio* of the

author.

This means that *narratio* has a far more complex and important relationship with

temporality than simply as a means of constructing a persuasive account of the past. One of the

most significant reasons for emphasizing the importance of *narratio* for recounting temporal

events is the unique ability of *narratio* to bring those in the present in contact with the events

being recounted. Whenever one constructs a communicative work, a good author takes the

relationships (*apta*) between all the parties involved into account. The relationships between

author and topic, topic and audience, and author and audience must be at the forefront of the

author's mind. These relationships can take a number of different forms. The listener can relate

to the topic either as a decision-maker who is intended to be moved to action by the speech, or as

a passive spectator, intended to be caught up in the topic being presented. In the first sense, the

listener is envisioned as a judge presiding over a trial concerning past events or as a member of a

political assembly making a decision about the future. In the second sense, the listener relates to

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[71] *Orat.* 2.39.166.

[72] Woodman, *Rhetoric*, 82. In Cicero's account in *De oratore*, the *exaedificatio* consists of *res* and *verba* and is of principal importance. The parallel between Cicero's account in *De oratore* and Augustine's account in *De doctrina christiana*, where he distinguishes between *res* and *signa* (of which *verba* are his primary concern), is obvious.

the topic as a spectator, resulting not in their judgement but rather in their participation (intellectually or emotionally) in the topic itself.[73] Based on these relationships, the three basic genres of speech topics emerge: the judicial, which addresses the listener as a judge; the deliberative, which addresses the listener as a participant; and the epideictic, which addresses the listener as a sympathetic bystander. The sort of speech used depends on the intention of the author and on the situation, for each has a distinct strategy.

Naturally, then, the way an audience would relate to the *narratio* also differed depending on the goal of the author. In other words, the form *narratio* took depended on the function the author assigned to it. Three ways *narratio* was used prove to be especially instructive for this study. First, in a forensic speech, when it was used to speak primarily of past events in the context of trying to persuade an audience by garnering intellectual assent, the audience would relate to the *narratio* as a judge standing at a distance from the narrative in order to evaluate it.[74] Second, in the deliberative genre, *narratio* would often be used to speak of imagined narratives set in the future.[75] Because the goal in deliberative speeches was to persuade an audience to take action on some matter, it was particularly important for the orator to addresses them as participants in the narrative.[76] In this case, *narratio* is again concerned with temporal sequence, even though it is set in the future. In the deliberative genre, the audience members become active participants, being thrust into the *narratio* as it is constructed, and following the twists and turns of the plot with personal attention. Finally, *narratio* became an important tool used across genres

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[73] See Lausberg, *Handbook*, § 60.

[74] See Lausberg, *Handbook*, § 60.

[75] The deliberative genre was used for political debate, but it was also came to be the genre associated with giving advice more generally. See Cicero, *inu.* 2.51.156-2.58.176; *part. or.* 24.83-25.89.

[76] *Inst.* 3.8.12. Aristotle saw the audience's role to be akin to that of a referee or arbitrator. See *Rhet.* 1358b 3.

to communicate philosophical truths by way of figuration. This could take place through events

set in the present, past, or future, and could be actual or imagined. This is perhaps best seen in

fabulae, where the author's expressed intention is to have the reader contemplate some moral

truth. That is why Quintilian holds that such stories "be treated by boys, not with a view to

eloquence, but for the purpose of increasing their knowledge."[77] The exercise of seeking the

meaning of Aesop's fables prepares one to "be able to learn anything," he claims.[78] The key

difference between this and the other uses of *narratio*, is that the figurative meaning of the

narratio is used to point to some eternal truth. Depending on the author's goal, then, *narratio*

could be used in a variety of ways to foster different kinds of relationships between the audience

and the topic.

To facilitate these relationships, the notion of *oeconomia* plays a significant role. In the

classical rhetorical tradition, the word *oeconomia* (Grk. οἰκονομία), which, according to

Quintilian had no Latin equivalent, was used to speak of the various elements of *elocutio,* or

style.[79] In the Latin tradition, it seems to have been most often applied directly to the *dispositio*,

or arrangement, of an oration. As Kathy Eden has observed, *oeconomia* played a parallel role to

dispositio as *decorum* played to elocution or style. In both cases, the distinguishing characteristic

is the emphasis placed on accommodation to a particular context. She comments: "Whereas *taxis*

or *dispositio* refers to a straightforward organization of material, one that follows both the natural

order of events and the conditional order of composition, *oeconomia* follows a more indirect,

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[77] *Inst.* 1.9.1.

[78] *Inst.* 1.9.1.

[79] See Kathy Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition: Chapters in the Ancient Legacy and Its Humanist Reception* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 27. For an argument that the notion of *oeconomia* played a determinative role in Augustine's hermeneutic dating back to a year or two after his conversion, see Brian Gronewoller, "God the Author: Augustine's Early Incorporation of the Rhetorical Concept of *Oeconomia* into his Scriptural Hermeneutic" *AugStud* 47 (2016): 65-77.

artificial organization, one altered specifically to accommodate the circumstances of the case."[80]

Oeconomia played a decisive role in determining the ordering of the elements in a composition, based on the relationship the author wanted to facilitate between the audience and the topic. The Greek word *oikonomia* was originally borrowed from the domestic arena, taking its sense of literary unity from the family unit. The application of this term to the rhetorical realm indicated that individual parts of speech were to be interpreted in light of their family resemblance found in the work as a whole. This is why Quintilian advises his students to arrange the facts in a *narratio* in such a way that they will not seem like "strangers (*ignotae*) thrust into uncongenial company from distant places, but will be united with what precedes and follows by an intimate bond of union (*societate*)," which will result in a speech giving the impression of "natural continuity (*continua*)."[81] The relationships between the different parts of the speech, including the parts that make up the *narratio*, therefore, have direct bearing on whether the audience relates to the speech as judge, participants, or bystanders.

The author and interpreter, then, both have a unique relationship with the arrangement of a speech in general, and with *narratio* in particular. The author must create it in such a way that the interpreter is able relate to it in the proper way, and the interpreter must read it from the proper perspective in order to interpret the author's meaning. Very often this means the audience must enter into the narrative themselves. This is why Quintilian likens the interpretation of *narratio* to the interpretation of poetry, for both require the audience to play a role within the

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[80] Eden, *Hermeneutics*, 28. Cf. *Rhet. Her.* 3.16-17 and *Orat.* 2.76.307.

[81] *Inst.* 7.10.16-17; cf. 10.7.14. Eden summarizes the function of *oeconomia* well, saying that "literary economy works, like its counterpart, *decorum*, to accommodate the particular occasion. Subordinating the individual parts of the discourse to the overall plan of the whole, *oeconomia*, a principle of composition and interpretation, presupposes the whole in the disposition of the parts." Eden, *Hermeneutics*, 30.

work.[82] By including the audience in the *narratio* of temporal events, *narratio* has the unique

ability to bring the present in contact with the past or the future in a variety of different ways.

<center>*Authorial Intent*</center>

The second important feature of *narratio* for our purposes is its reliance on authorial intent to

convey meaning. The whole point of drawing connections between events, terms and characters

is to aid the interpreter in deciphering the authorial intent. Interpretation of a speech, therefore,

was a matter of reading the *narratio* to determine the *uoluntas*, or will, of the author.[83] In fact,

the Latin classical tradition held that in a rhetorical or literary work one finds the very reflection

of the author. Rhetoric, in its broadest sense, is defined as *ars bene dicendi*,[84] or as *bene decendi*

scientia.[85] There is a kind of "double-meaning" of *bene* at work in this definition.[86] That is to

say, in contrast to the virtue of the *grammaticus*, which consists in correctness and is measured

by distinct grammatical rules, the virtue of the rhetor is found in both a technical and moral

sense: in the technical sense, it refers to the strength of the composition; and in the moral sense,

it refers to the goodness of the orator.[87] Both are required for rhetoric to realize its highest form.

To separate the two was to betray the very virtue of the art. In a real sense, the speaker's moral

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[82] He speaks of the *enarratio poetarum* as belonging within the branch of grammar designated as *historice. Inst.* 1.9.1. Cf. 1.4.2; 1.8.18-21

[83] Even in the case of literature, when interpretive discrepancies arose, it was the authorial intent, and not the syntactical meaning, that was generally given primacy. See Tarmo Toom, "Was Augustine an Intentionalist? Authorial Intention in Augustine's Hermeneutics" *SP* 54 (2012): 1-10.

[84] *Inst*. 2.17.37.

[85] *Inst*. 2.14.5.

[86] Lausberg, *Handbook*, § 32.

[87] Lousberg, *Handbook,* § 32.

character is transferred to the work through composition, such that the work ought to be a faithful representation of the author.

Nevertheless, there was a distinction made in classical rhetoric between knowing the author's will and knowing the truth of the thing of which the author speaks.[88] If the orator were tasked with speaking on a philosophical topic to an audience ignorant of philosophy, for example, Cicero recommends that the orator accommodate his message to the level of the audience. When speaking of justice, he should refrain from including reflections on a perfectly ordered soul or a just way of life; even though these themes are, ideally speaking, the most proper elements of justice, they would likely be far beyond the understanding of the audience. In this case, Cicero advises the orator to treat justice in the popular sense instead.[89] In this way, there was often a very real distinction between the *intentio* or *uoluntas* of the orator and the *res* of which he speaks.

In the case of *narratio*, this distinction cannot be made in the same way.[90] One of the central features of *narratio* is that it admits of different levels of meaning, ranging from the most obvious, or plain sense, to the more subtle and nuanced, or obscure sense. In theory, one is able to communicate to people of different intellectual ability at the same time. This is because, in *narratio*, the meaning of the author is rarely explicitly stated; it is instead implied by drawing on a variety of techniques, such as metaphor, imagery, repetition, and word association. An

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[88] This distinction became especially important beginning with Cicero, for whom rhetoric is used to address philosophical questions.

[89] *Orat.* 2.310-11. Ernst Fortin has described this as the "ironic posture" of Cicero's perfect orator, in which the orator becomes "a liar, not because he wants to, but because he has no choice in the matter." E. Fortin, "Augustine and the Problem of Christian Rhetoric" *AugStud* (1974), 91. Cf. *Orat.* 2.310-11.

[90] The only way there can be a gap between the authorial intent and the truth of the things of which he speaks is if the author is lying about the events themselves. However, this is a different issue, since it solely concerns the moral character of the author and not simply the ability of the audience to understand.

audience taken into a *narratio* discerns the author's *uoluntas* indirectly in accordance with their capacity. Thus, in a well-constructed *narratio*, the *res* of which the author speaks is intimately bound up with the author's *uoluntas*.

Conclusion

Having been thoroughly trained in the art of rhetoric, Augustine would have been well aware of the significance *narratio* came to carry as the strategic sequencing of events. The two defining features of *narratio*—temporal arrangement and authorial intent—not only helped to make *narratio* the expansive term it came to be but also gave it new importance for the construction and interpretation of both oral and written works. It became an important tool for an author to communicate his *causa* by arranging events and characters in a strategic way; and it became equally important for the interpreter to attend to its numerous devices in order to discern the author's intended meaning. Its effectiveness is predicated on the interplay between the author, work, and the audience. The increased attention to these relationships characterizes *narratio*'s expanding sense and determines the ways in which it came to be employed.

De doctrina christiana

With a sense of the broad application of *narratio* that Augustine would have known, we are now in a position to turn in the remainder of this chapter to Augustine's works themselves in order to determine how *narratio* is at work in his view and use of Scripture. The most natural place to begin is by looking at his hermeneutical handbook, *De doctrina christiana*. Here we not only find Augustine explicitly using *narratio* in both its broad and technical senses, but we find that it undergirds his figurative exegesis as well. It therefore plays an essential role in how he

understands the divine author to have constructed Scripture and how it must subsequently be read.

The Two Senses of Narratio

In this work, *narratio* or one of its variants occurs 19 times.[91] The majority of these occurrences are inconsequential for our purposes, but there are three passages—two in book 2 and one in book 3—where Augustine offers a significant discussion of *narratio* and which warrant further examination. In these discussions there emerges a distinct use of *narratio* that reveals it to be at the heart of Augustine's understanding of the divine strategy of revelation.[92] Only in a brief passage found in 2.36 does he use *narratio* in its technical sense, as the second part of an oration. There he discusses how eloquence can be used to persuade, and he cautions his readers that a well-constructed *narratio* that is short and clear should not be allowed to convince one of a false opinion.[93] The remaining two passages where he discusses *narratio* are more extensive and show him using *narratio* in its expanded sense.

When Augustine considers how secular learning can aid in the task of interpreting Scripture in book 2, he distinguishes between three different kinds of *narratio*. The first is in chapter 28, where he addresses the role of history in the interpretation of Scripture. There he says,

> In the course of an historical narrative (*narratione*) where former institutions of men are narrated (*narrantur*), the history itself is not to be counted among human institutions,

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[91] This is according to my own count.

[92] It is worth noting that he does not discuss *narratio* in any significant way in book 4, the book where he deals most directly with preaching, and where one would expect to find him discussing it if it were limited to its technical sense.

[93] *Doc. chr.* 2.36.54.

since things that are in the past and finished and cannot be undone are to be counted as belonging to the course of time, of which God is the author and administrator.[94]

In this passage, Augustine makes the point that the record of the events of history, which he characterizes as *narratio*, should not be considered as human convention in the way that he will say language is a human convention. Rather, he says, the events of history must be interpreted within God's providential order. The important point he draws from this is that history, and not just the record of historical events, serves as a *narratio* arranged by the divine author.[95]

Augustine then identifies a second kind of *narratio*, one which he says resembles description because it does not deal directly with past events (*narratio demonstrationi similis*).[96] This kind of *narratio* has to do with the knowledge of natural science, including the study of animal and plant life, as well as the study of astronomy.[97] The study of natural science, just like history, Augustine claims, yields a kind of *narratio* because it reveals an arrangement within the natural order.[98] Both history and natural science have the ability to produce meaning by drawing together events or facts that might seem disconnected on the surface into a sequential order. Therefore, Augustine characterizes both as *narratio*. Clearly, then, *narratio* does not function

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[94] *Doc. chr.* 2.28.44 (CCSL 32 63; NPNF 1/2:549): *narratione autem historica cum praeterita etiam hominum instituta narrantur, non inter humana instituta ipsa historia numeranda est, quia iam quae transierunt nec infecta fieri possunt, in ordine temporum habenda sunt, quorum est conditor et administrator deus.*

[95] At one point, Augustine neatly distinguishes between narrative, prophecy, and description in Scripture, where narrative is used to speak of past events, description to speak of present events, and prophecy to speak of future events. In explaining how Scripture proclaims nothing but the Catholic faith, Augustine asserts that Scripture is "a narrative of the past, a prophecy of the future, and a description of the present." *Doc.chr.* 3.10.15 (CCSL 32): *praeteritorum narratio est, futurorum praenuntiatio, praesentium demonstratio.*

[96] *Doc. chr.* 2.29.45 (CCSL 32 64).

[97] *Doc. chr.* 2.29.46 (CCSL 32 64): *habet autem praeter demonstrationem praesentium, etiam praeteritorum narrationi simile aliquid, quod a praesenti positione motu que siderum et in praeterita eorum uestigia regulariter licet recurrere.*

[98] *Doc. chr.* 2.29.46 (CCSL 32 64): *siderum autem cognoscendorum non narratio, sed demonstratio est, quorum perpauca scriptura commemorat.*

simply as a technical term in *De doctrina christiana*. While he does use *narratio* in its technical

sense in chapter 36, his inclusion of history and natural science under the rubric of *narratio*

shows the importance *narratio* has as a broader category in his thought. Therefore, in book 2 we

find two distinct senses of *narratio* at work in Augustine's thought, which are defined by the

same features we observed above to be central to *narratio* in its broad sense.

While book 2 reveals some important things about Augustine's use of *narratio* in relation

to history and natural science, in book 3 Augustine hints at the importance of *narratio* within

Scripture itself. The final passage where Augustine discusses *narratio* in *De doctrina christiana*

is found near the end of book 3, where he considers Tychonius's sixth rule, the rule of

"recapitulation." This exegetical rule, in Augustine's words, states that while the "narrative [of

Scripture] appears to be following the order of time, or the continuity of events," it often "goes

back without mentioning it to previous events."[99] What is especially significant about how

Augustine makes use of this rule is that it reveals the importance of paying attention to the

underlying *narratio* present in Scripture in order to properly interpret it.

Augustine gives three examples of recapitulation at work. But each of the examples he

gives could just as easily be read as illustrations of the importance of recognizing a coherent

narratio present in Scripture. First, he gives the example of Genesis 2:8-9, where we are told that

God placed man in the garden and caused plants to grow from the ground and produce fruit. He

observes that this passage seems to indicate that God planted the fruit trees after he placed man

in the garden. However, the reader already knows that this is not the case. Therefore, when

Scripture immediately goes on to recount how God planted the garden, Augustine says, we must

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[99] *Doc. chr.* 3.36.52 (CCSL 32 107; NPNF 1/2:572): *sic enim dicuntur quaedam, quasi sequantur in ordine temporis uel rerum continuatione narrentur, cum ad priora, quae praetermissa fuerant, latenter narratio reuocetur; quod nisi ex hac regula intellegatur, erratur.*

understand it to be recapitulating, providing the information that had been previously omitted. The reason the reader should have confidence that this is, in fact, the case is because Scripture has a reliable *narratio* that, while not always following the chronological ordering of events, is based on a coherent temporal sequence.

Augustine's next two examples further affirm the coherence of Scripture's *narratio* as the basis for his interpretation. His second example comes from Genesis 10:32. There we are told that each of the sons of Noah had families who spoke the language of their nation. However, immediately after stating this, Scripture tells us that "the whole earth was of one language and of one speech." There is an inconsistency here: either there was a variety of languages or there was not. Augustine reasons that the last sentence must be understood as recapitulation, in which the narrative goes back without warning to describe a time before the nations were scattered at the tower of Babel.[100] Finally, Augustine states that there is a more obscure form in which recapitulation is found to be at work. He looks to the passage found in Luke 17:29-32, which reads:

> [B]ut on the day when Lot went out from Sodom fire and sulphur rained from heaven and destroyed them all—so will it be on the day when the Son of man is revealed. On that day, let him who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away; and likewise let him who is in the field not turn back. Remember Lot's wife (RSV).

Augustine observes that the phrase "on the day" seems to suggest that we must heed the example of Lot's wife only upon Christ's return. But, he asks, is it not true that we must not look back to our old lives even now? He suggests that the reader must be "watchful" (*inuigilet*) and "intelligent" (*intellegendam*) to take notice of the recapitulation at work in this passage, which

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[100] *Doc. chr.* 3.36.52.

once again is to be interpreted on the basis of Scripture's *narratio*.[101] There is a clear conviction present in Augustine's interpretation that Scripture consists of a coherent and reliable *narratio*. In fact, his use of Tychonius's rule of recapitulation serves the very function of defending this conviction.

The three important occurrences of *narratio* in *De doctrina christiana*, which I have just outlined, offer us a snapshot view into how Augustine understood *narratio* and how he found it to be at work in Scripture. He uses it in its technical sense in book 2, but in the far more significant passages where *narratio* occurs, it is used in its broader sense. Not only does Augustine use it to speak of secular history, but *narratio* is also the term he consciously employs to describe branches of natural science which offer sequential ordering of events or facts. Finally, turning to his use of *narratio* in book 3, we find Augustine showing great concern to guard the *narratio* of Scripture as the basis from which to derive meaning from the text. All of this points to the central place of *narratio* in Augustine's understanding of the divine strategy in Scripture.

Narratio *and Signification*

Keeping these key characteristics of *narratio* in mind, I will now turn to show how *narratio* undergirds Augustine's hermeneutic more subtly. One of the things Augustine has at the forefront of his mind throughout *De doctrina christiana* is the limitations of human language. Human language is a temporal medium and is therefore insufficient for directly communicating anything about eternity. It cannot, in and of itself, say anything about God.[102] To be effective,

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[101] *Doc. chr.* 3.36.61 (CCSL 32 108).

[102] See *Conf.* 11.

then, human language must communicate indirectly.[103] This character of human language is at

the heart of Augustine's discussion of signs and is, in many ways, the issue at the heart of his

entire theology of Scripture. However, a close reading of Augustine's theory of signification

reveals the important role *narratio* plays in his project. The way he sets up the referential

relationship between *signum* and *res* proves to be especially suited to a narrative-conditioned

pattern of signification. It is, therefore, by paying special attention to the relationship between

sign and referent in Augustine's thought that the most important role of *narratio* within his

understanding of the divine strategy, and thus for his exegesis, becomes apparent.

Book 1 sets his whole discussion of the interpretation of Scripture in the context of love

for God, and thus establishes at the outset the spiritual character of Scripture. Augustine begins

by drawing a sharp distinction between things (*res*) and signs (*signa*). A thing, strictly speaking,

is that which is an end in itself, while a sign is anything which points to a thing.[104] For example,

the Latin word *bos* is a sign, while the physical ox to which it points is a thing. Here, while

laying the foundation for his more detailed discussion of signs in book 2, Augustine adds a

crucial innovative twist by bringing *caritas* to bear on his theory of signification:

> Of all, then, that has been said since we entered upon the discussion about things, this is
> the sum: that we should clearly understand that the fulfillment and the end of the Law,
> and of all Holy Scripture, is the love of an object which is to be enjoyed, and the love of
> an object which can enjoy that other in fellowship with ourselves. . . . The whole
> temporal dispensation for our salvation, therefore, was framed by the providence of God
> that we might know this truth and be able to act upon it; and we ought to use that
> dispensation, not with such love and delight as if it were a good to rest in, but with a
> transient feeling rather, such as we have towards the road, or carriages, or other things
> that are merely means. Perhaps some other comparison can be found that will more

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[103] This is why Andrew Louth has characterized Augustine's view of language as "a fractured form of communication" in Andrew Louth, "Augustine on Language," *Literature and Theology* 3 (1989), 154.

[104] *Doc. chr*. 1.2.2.

suitably express the idea that we are to love the things by which we are borne only for the sake of that towards which we are borne.[105]

By holding that only God is to be loved for his own sake, Augustine makes the conceptual connection between use (*uti*) and signs (*signa*) on the one hand, and enjoyment (*frui*) and thing (*res*) on the other. All signs ultimately point to God and are, therefore, to be used as a means of enjoying, or loving, him. Properly speaking, only God—as Father, Son and Spirit—is an end in himself, and therefore only he is properly called a 'thing'; everything else functions as a sign in some capacity, for everything else points to him. If the interpreter traces the significatory relationships properly, they will ultimately be led into a contemplation of the life of the divine Trinity. The purpose of exegesis is to move beyond the signs of Scripture to the contemplation of the thing to which they point. It is a movement from this temporal realm to the eternal. This context is vital in order to understand what Augustine is up to throughout the remainder of the work and to appreciate the important role *narratio* plays in it.

In book 2, Augustine builds on the foundation he laid book 1 and discusses his theory of signification in greater detail. He begins by distinguishing between two basic classes of signs. Some signs, he says, are "natural" signs (*signa naturalia*), based on a natural cause and effect relationship. Smoke as a sign of fire or footprints as a sign of an animal's presence are examples of natural signs.[106] Other signs, he tells us, are "conventional" signs (*signa data*), the result of an agreed upon meaning. There are many examples of conventional signs, but Augustine is most

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[105] *Doc. chr.* 1.35.39 (CCSL 32 28; NPNF 1/2:534): *omnium igitur, quae dicta sunt, ex quo de rebus tractamus, haec summa est, ut intelligatur legis et omnium diuinarum scripturarum plenitudo et finis esse dilectio rei, qua fruendum est, et rei, quae nobis cum ea re frui potest, quia, ut se quisque diligat, praecepto non opus est. hoc ergo ut nossemus atque possemus, facta est tota pro nostra salute per diuinam prouidentiam dispensatio temporalis, qua debemus uti, non quasi mansoria quadam dilectione et delectatione, sed transitoria potius tamquam uiae, tamquam uehiculorum uel aliorum quorumlibet instrumentorum aut si quid congruentius dici potest, ut ea quibus ferimur, propter illud, ad quod ferimur, diligamus.*

[106] *Doc. chr.* 2.1.2 (CCSL 32 32).

interested in words which make up language.[107] For example, the word *bos* is a conventional sign which points beyond the arrangement of letters to a physical ox. It is the result of an agreed upon convention that this particular arrangement of letters will be the standard means of signifying an ox. It is at this point that Augustine introduces the problem that will inform much of what he has to say in the remainder of book 2. The relationship between a particular word and the thing which it signifies appears to be set up by Augustine as an arbitrary relationship. There is nothing inherent in the letters *b-o-s* which requires them to signify an ox when placed together in that order; because they are established solely by agreement, there is no necessary connection between conventional signs and their referents. This arbitrary relationship, as Augustine recognizes, increases the potential for misinterpretation.[108] There is no obvious, inherent connection between the sign and its referent which the interpreter can rely on. To interpret it properly, one must simply learn the convention.

Furthermore, the word *bos* signifying an ox is an example of what Augustine calls a "proper" (*propria*) conventional sign, a sign which has a simple relationship with its *res*. This sort of simple relationship between *signum* and *res* is found in many things. Examples include pictures and sculptures, where the likeness between them and their referent is obvious.[109] Other signs, such as those made by actors upon a stage, could be difficult to understand, for the *similitudo* between the signs and those things which they signify is not as easy to discern. Often, an interpreter is required for one to understand them.[110] Similarly, the customs of dress and

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[107] *Doc. chr*. 2.2.3.

[108] It is important to note that it is only one who is not acquainted with the customary meaning who finds the sign arbitrary. Those who are acquainted with the convention see a likeness between the sign and that which it signifies, for it was on this basis that the sign came to stand for the particular thing in the first place. *Doc. chr*. 2.25.38.

[109] *Doc. chr*. 2.25.39.

[110] *Doc. chr*. 2.25.39.

conduct in a particular place signify something beyond themselves, though a foreigner might not be able to ascertain what that is.[111] Still, these are all examples of "proper" conventional signs, where the sign has a simple relationship with its referent. In cases where the 'thing' to which the sign points is not immediately obvious, knowledge of the signs themselves will often help to overcome this problem.

However, while conventional signs, when functioning as proper signs, connote a simple relationship between *signum* and *res*, Augustine maintains that conventional signs can also function figuratively. Here the process of signification becomes more complex. For example, *bos* refers to a physical ox, but that ox might in turn signify something else—a preacher of the gospel—when it functions figuratively.[112] The physical ox, which initially appears to be the 'thing' to which the word *bos* points, turns out to be a sign itself. Thus *bos* in this context has come to communicate indirectly, or figuratively, a preacher. What was a simple sign-referent relationship has become more complex by taking on a figurative meaning. In order to properly interpret figurative signs, knowledge of the signs themselves is not enough; one must also have knowledge of the things to which the signs point.[113] In this case, one must not merely know that *bos* means 'ox', but also that an ox is known for its value as a strong labourer, just as a preacher labours for the gospel. In a similar way, when he considers the command in the Gospel to be wise like *serpentes* in Matt. 10:16, he notes that this passages is meant to lead interpreters into the figurative signification process.[114] He observes that it is a well-known fact that the serpent will protect its head at all bodily cost when it is attacked, and so he draws the figurative

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[111] *Doc. chr*. 2.25.39.

[112] *Doc. chr*. 2.10.15; 1 Cor. 4:9.

[113] *Doc. chr*. 2.16.23.

[114] *Doc. chr*. 2.16.24.

implication that "for the sake of our head, which is Christ, we should willingly offer our body to the persecutors."[115] Such a figurative reading requires that one not only know that the word "serpent" refers to a physical snake in its proper sense, but also that one know something about the serpent so that one is able to see what the image of a serpent figuratively points to. Based on a certain likeness, or *similitudo*, between the image and the figurative referent, the reader is able to follow the figurative process of signification, from the words ox (*bos*) and serpents (*serpentes*) to the respective animals themselves and, by observing the similarity of certain characteristics with the character of a preacher and a Christian, one can follow the figurative process on to the respective figurative meanings.

But this seems to open up endless figurative possibilities. How can one know when to interpret a sign figuratively and when to interpret it in accordance with is "proper" sign-referent relationship? Here the importance of *narratio* becomes evident as the means by which Scripture's strategy of signification is communicated and, therefore, also becomes the key to being able to read the signs of Scripture properly.[116] Signs that are normally "proper signs" only become figurative when they are brought into Scripture's "narrative orbit," to use Rowan Williams' term.[117] In one's day-to-day life, *bos* ordinarily serves as a proper sign, pointing to a physical ox; it is only within the context of Scripture's *narratio* that it takes on a figurative

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[115] *Doc. chr*. 2.16.24 (CCSL 32 49; NPNF 1/2:543): *ut scilicet pro capite nostro, quod est christus, corpus potius persequentibus offeramus*

[116] Rebecca Harden Weaver has made a similar observation. She says, "To achieve this self-knowledge, the interpreter must gain familiarity with the biblical text, memorizing as much of it as possible. Augustine concluded his discussion of the methods of interpreting signs with a similar admonition (3.37.56). In effect, he bracketed his presentation on biblical signs with an insistence on the need for intimate familiarity with the sweep of scripture: its fundamental content, and style. Since everything that pertains to faith and morals (i.e., hope and charity) is set forth in passages that are clear, these should be given special attention (2.9.14). Again, it is only after gaining a solid grasp of the message of scripture ('the thing') that the interpreter should begin to consider the signs that refer to it." "Reading the Signs: Guidance for the Pilgrim Community," *Interpretation* 58 (2004), 36.

[117] Rowan Williams, "Language, Reality and Desire in Augustine's *De Doctrina*," *Journal of Literature and Theology* 3 (1989), 148.

dimension. Augustine hints at this early on in book 1 when he introduces the distinction between *signum* and *res*. Augustine uses wood, stone and cattle as examples of 'things'. However, he adds a caveat, in which he makes a special exception for the wood which Moses cast into the bitter water at Mara (Exod. 15:25), the stone which Jacob used as a pillow (Gen. 28:11), and the ram which Abraham offered instead of Isaac (Gen 12:13). They are excluded from being 'things' in the proper sense because, though they are 'things', they are also signs within the biblical *narratio*.[118] Ordinarily, physical wood, stones and cattle are 'things' signified by words; however, because of the conventional quality of language, these things can bear particular figurative meanings within the *narratio* of Scripture. Because of the significant role wood plays at pivotal points within the narrative (as the means of salvation during the flood and at Christ's crucifixion, for example), it takes on a figurative function, in which it is closely associated with God's salvific work throughout the rest of the narrative as well. Similarly, because Scripture explicitly makes the connection between an ox and a preacher (1 Tim. 5:18), all other scriptural references to an ox naturally conjure up associations with a preacher. These terms have been metaphorasized within the *narratio* of Scripture. Therefore, the *narratio* functions as an integral part of Augustine's theory of signification, providing both the possibilities and limits of the figuration process. As such, it serves as a secondary sphere of convention.[119]

However, by placing such strong emphasis on *narratio* for interpreting the signs of Scripture, as Augustine implicitly does, he seems to create another problem. It appears as though

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[118] *Doc. chr.* 1.2.2.

[119] It is worth noting the comparison between the emphasis on narrative construct I am making here and Michael Cameron's emphasis on the Incarnation in his account of Augustine's figurative exegesis. For Cameron, Augustine's developing Christology shifted his understanding of language from a "spiritualist paradigm" to an "incarnational paradigm." This is where Cameron locates the corresponding development in Augustine's understanding of the relationship between sign and thing, from "disjunctive and coincidental" to "conjunctive and intrinsic." Michael Cameron, "Augustine's Construction of Figurative Exegesis Against the Donatists in the *Enarrationes in Psalmos*," Ph.D. diss. (University of Chicago, 1996), 70.

the system he has set up makes Scripture completely self-referential, infinitely bound within itself and, therefore, unable to say anything meaningful about God. However, this is only the case if one lifts his theory of language out of the theological and spiritual context in which he placed it in book 1. There Augustine established that signification ultimately serves the purpose of fostering the love for and enjoyment of the Trinity.[120] As Rowan Williams points out, Scripture, for Augustine, is "not simply for 'play', but for the formation of *caritas*. It is not textuality that is, ultimately, infinite, but the love of God, shaping our love."[121] In other words, Scripture has a distinctly spiritual character and serves a distinctly spiritual end. By properly reading the signs contained in Scripture with its spiritual end in mind, Augustine holds, one is led from the world of material and temporal images to the contemplation of the immaterial and eternal.[122] This is not, I have claimed, a straightforward process for Augustine, but rather a process that involves close attention to the inner workings of the divine author's *narratio*.

Conclusion

From this brief survey of *De doctrina christiana*, the centrality of *narratio* for Augustine's theology of Scripture is beginning to come into focus. He uses *narratio* in both its technical and broad senses when discussing Scripture, and this understanding informs his figurative interpretation as well. In particular, it is the way *narratio* enables one to rise beyond the literal meaning of the text and come to recognize its rich figurative dimensions that stands out as its

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[120] My reading of *Doc. chr.* follows the approach of Rowan Williams, who insists that Augustine's theory of signification cannot be analyzed in isolation from the theology found in *Doc. chr.* See Williams, "Language."

[121] Williams, "Language," 146.

[122] Brian Stock has characterized the spiritual movement of the reader in similar terms, noting the unique role narrative plays in this process: "In Augustine's view, narrative thinking has its basis in a sequence of sounds or images impinging on the senses, which subsequently pass through the *sensus interior* to the mind." Brian Stock, *Augustine's Inner Dialogue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 181.

greatest value. The first three books of this important work, therefore, clearly reveal that he understands *narratio* to be a key component of the overarching strategy of divine revelation. Before turning to consider how this understanding of Scripture informs his view of preaching in book 4, I will first trace briefly the development of his own reading practice to see if it reveals any further nuances to his use of *narratio* in his theology of Scripture.

Spiritual Reading

I have already noted above that the way Augustine understands the divine *narratio* to function requires a spiritual understanding of Scripture in order to be successful. Based on the unique character of Scripture, Augustine consistently holds that one must then read it in the appropriate way. Just as the relationship between an audience, orator and topic is vital for the success of an oration, so also Augustine recognizes that the reader must relate to Scripture in a certain way in order to read it properly. He came to see that the reader must approach Scripture humbly, recognizing that in it one will catch a glimpse—albeit an imperfect glimpse—of the unity of God in eternity through the harmony of his temporal revelation.[123] Reading Scripture with humility allows one to see how all of its parts fit together into a coherent whole to reveal the divine *uolantas*. Significantly, then, Augustine's own reading practice reflects his attention to the same two features we noted above as central for *narratio*: temporality and authorial intent. Coming to see the importance of these two elements for reading Scripture was pivotal for Augustine's own conversion to Catholic Christianity and thus for his subsequent practice of reading Scripture as well.[124] As Michael Cameron has pointed out, a pivotal moment in Augustine's conversion was

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[123] See *Conf.* 3.5.9.

[124] In his *Confessions*, he recalls how he turned to the Catholic Scriptures as a young man but was turned off from them because he found them to be unworthy (*indigna*) when compared to the eloquence of Cicero. However, while

when he came to see that Scripture has a single, divine author who communicates to humanity as

a master orator and that the individual parts of Scripture, spread out in time, fit together to reveal

the divine author's intent.[125] Significantly, Augustine himself characterizes this change of

perspective as learning to read Scripture "spiritually" (*spiritualiter*).[126]

Temporality

When Augustine speaks about reading and interpreting Scripture, he displays careful

consideration for its temporal quality. As early as *De uera religione*, written in 391, Augustine

shows a concern to interpret Scripture in light of the underlying *narratio* of salvation history. It

is here where we find the appearance of the term, *dispensatio temporalis,* for the first time.[127]

Again, in *De catechizandis rudibus*, written about a decade later, he carefully divides redemptive

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listening to Ambrose's sermons in Milan, he slowly began to change his perspective as he came to understand that Scripture must be read according to its own eloquence. *Conf.* 3.4.39. This was not an instantaneous revelation but involved a slow process. Augustine himself says in his *Confessions* that it occurred "slowly" (*sensim*; 5.13.23), "gradually" (*gradatim*; 5.14.24). and "little by little" (*paulatim*; 6.5.7). See Cameron, *Christ Meets*, 27.

[125] Cameron has described this realization as Augustine's "reorientation to a *comprehensive* biblical hermeneutic." Cameron, *Christ Meets*, 26; cf. 39. He suggests that the source of this is found by looking to the influence of Augustine's training in rhetoric. He points out that "Augustine's original problem with the Bible was not intellectual but rhetorical: not that it was unphilosophical but that it was un-Ciceronian." Cameron, *Christ Meets*, 27. Therefore, Cameron reasons, rather than looking for a philosophical shift in Augustine's thinking, "Augustine's profession as a teacher of rhetoric is the best place to look for clues to his makeover." In Cameron's view, the preaching of Ambrose helped "connect the biblical dots within a rhetorical framework that was familiar from Augustine's daily teaching routine." Cameron, *Christ Meets*, 26. It was once he saw how the parts of Scripture all work together in harmony that he recognized its divine eloquence. For a useful critique of Cameron's work, see Isabelle Bochet "Réflexions sur l'exégèse figurative d'Augustin: *Christ Meets Me Everywhere: Augustine's Early Figurative Exegesis* de M. Cameron" *Augustinian Studies* 45 (2014): 281-290.

[126] See *Conf.* 5.14.24, where Augustine explains that he listened over and over to Ambrose explain *aenigmate solute* from Scripture. The problem, he writes, was that he was reading them *ad literam*, instead of *spiritualiter*. For a sketch of Ambrose's figurative exegesis and its effect on Augustine, see William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 86-89. Cf. *spir. et litt.*, 6.4, where he makes use of the letter/spirit distinction in a very different sense. There he uses it to make an argument for the necessity of grace, and explicitly states that this distinction is not one which "merely prescribes that we should not take in the literal sense any figurative phrase which in the proper meaning of its words would produce only nonsense."

[127] *Uer.rel.* 7.13, 10.19, 55.110. The term *dispensatio temporalis* occurs a number of times after this, especially throughout the 390s. For a list of occurrences, see Cameron, *Christ Meets*, 307.

history into seven *dispensationes*, each one building on the last.[128] During this period, Augustine also uses a reduced version of this schema, in which he speaks of four ages of salvation history.[129] Clearly, he had developed a keen appreciation for the temporal quality of God's revelation as it is recorded in Scripture, even if he did not articulate how this plays out in a consistent way.

Despite the development in Augustine's thinking on exactly how to divide the ages or dispensations, there are consistently two senses in which he understands the parts of Scripture's *narratio* to operate. On the one hand, they constitute a certain historical progression. Obviously, each age builds on the previous one in that it follows it chronologically. Therefore, the events of each age must be interpreted in accordance with the times and circumstances (*causae*) in which they occur. Augustine relies quite heavily on this point when defending the sacrificial rites of the Old Testament against the Manichees, for example. The rites commanded by the Law in the Old Testament were suitable for that time, Augustine maintains.[130] This means that one must not conclude from the difference between the rites of the Old and New Testaments that they refer to different realities; the difference in their appearance is due to the place of the rites within the temporal dispensation.[131] Augustine likens this difference to the changes of letters in a word

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[128] *Cat. rud.* was likely written sometime very shortly after the year 400. P.-M. Hombert, *Nouvelles recherches de chronologie augustinienne* (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2000), 41–44, makes a convincing case that it was composed in the year 403.

[129] This schema is first found in *exp. Rom.* 13-18, usually dated to 394: the first age was "before the law" (*ante legem*); the second age was "under the law" (*sub legem*); the third age is the present age "under grace" (*sub gratia*); and the fourth age remains in the future when sin and death will be fully eradicated and all creation will live "in peace" (*in pace*).

[130] *C. Faust*. 4.2.

[131] *C. Faust*. 19.16.

which communicates either future or past tense.[132] It is the same word, but it appears to be different because it is speaking to a different time. It is important that the reader understand the historical context of each part of Scripture in order to interpret it properly.

On the other hand, the *dispensationes* do not merely reveal the progression of historical events; they also constitute the layers of the divine *narratio*, and thereby point one beyond the events of history. Understanding the whole message of Scripture, therefore, requires that one also make sense of the way in which these layers, stretched out through time, are interrelated and dependent on one another. For Augustine, this means that, while one must be careful to interpret events recorded in Scripture in the light of the appropriate time period, one must also interpret every passage of Scripture in light of the whole scriptural revelation. There is always an interplay between the individual parts and the whole.[133] It is based on this interplay that Augustine came to see that the reader must use the *dispensatio temporalis* to perceive *aeternitas*, and thereby direct their hope to that which is eternal.[134] This kind of reading takes place not by trying to attain the eternal *in spite of* salvation history, but rather by perceiving it *in* and *through* temporal events and language.[135]

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[132] *C. Faust*. 19.6. In fact, the word *dispensatio* itself carries with it the connotation of adaptation or congruence. See Basil Studer, "History and Faith in Augustine's *De Trinitate*" *AugStud* 28 (1997): 7-50; 35, n.155.

[133] For examples of this principle at work in Augustine's exegesis at least from the time of *Gen. Man.* (c. 390), see Cameron, *Christ Meets*, 59-61.

[134] *Cat. rud.* 16.24.

[135] The two senses in which Augustine understood the dispensations to function are akin to the two senses of *historia* Basil Studer has found in Augustine's thought more generally. In the first place, Studer observes, it refers to investigation into the events of salvation history; in the second place, it stands as the record of those vents (i.e. *narratio*). Studer explains the two-fold meaning *historia* in this way:

> The first meaning is investigation or research, the second one is narration. This means that in terms of research, *historia* takes in both the past and the present, and is based upon the experience both of the person conducting the investigation and on the testimonies of other people. Yet, looking at its other context or signification, the word *historia* does not denote a succession of events, but, rather, the narration or exposition of either present or past persons or events. This *narratio rerum* which permits us to enter into contact with the past or present as far as it concerns what is remote from us, is communicated by words,

As a reader of Scripture, Augustine shows great concern for the quality of temporality found in Scripture's *narratio*, from early on in his episcopal career. For him, the different parts of Scripture are primarily and consistently divided in terms of historical progression or temporal sequence, and he held that discerning the meaning requires that one read the individual dispensations, or ages, in relationship to one another. Only then will one see how these parts contribute to produce a coherent whole.[136] The temporal quality of Scripture, when read properly, reveals the harmony of the text and produces harmony in the minds of its readers.

Authorial Intent

In order to properly perceive the harmony of the temporal revelation, Augustine maintains, the reader must seek the divine authorial intent, for it is in the intention of the author that the unity of the work is ultimately found. In *De doctrina christiana*, he states that the signs which comprise Scripture, just like all conventional signs, serve the purpose of communicating its author's intention, since, "there is no reason for us to signify something except to express and transmit to another's mind what is in the mind of the person who gives the sign."[137] Thus, when Augustine

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especially by written words. This double sense of the term *historia* was common to Greek and Latin authors alike, a fact demonstrated by the technical lexica of both languages. (Studer, "History," 15.)

The second sense of *historia* that Studer identifies is explicitly referred to as *narratio.* Michael Cameron has also identified two senses of *historia* in Augustine's thought. He characterizes them as "broad" and "narrow." For him, "the broad sense included spiritual meanings, while the narrow sense excluded them." The distinction Cameron is making here is similar to the one made by Studer. However, in my view, Cameron's characterization of the two senses in terms of "broad" and "narrow" is too simplistic to allow for the nuances of either sense in Augustine's thinking. See Cameron, *Christ Meets*, 67.

[136] In fact, earlier, in *util. cred.* 3.5 (390), Augustine offered a definition of *historia* in which he suggested that it does not require the events which it recounts to have actually happened in order for it to be called *historia* in the literary sense: *secundum historiam ergo traditur cum quid scriptum, aut quid gestum sit; quid non gestum sed tantummodo scriptum quasi gestum sit.*

[137] *Doc.Chr.* 2.2.3 (CCSL 32 54; NPNF 1/2:536): *nec ulla causa est nobis significandi, id est signi dandi, nisi ad depromendum et traiciendum in alterius animum id, quod animo gerit, qui signum dat.*

learned to read the signs of Scripture "spiritually," he learned to look not simply for non-bodily referents, but rather for the intention, or *uoluntas*, of the divine author.[138] This, once again, is characteristic of *narratio*, in which the emphasis is placed squarely on authorial intent (*uoluntas*).[139]

The Greeks often spoke of the *skopos* (σκοπός) or *hypothesis* (ὑπόθεσις) of a text, by which they meant the text's *telos* (τέλος), its "single-mindedness," "intent" or "aim."[140] The closest equivalent in Latin is *dispositio*, which speaks of the arrangement of a text or speech around a single theme or goal.[141] These terms all speak of the arrangement that results from the author's "will" (*uoluntas*). In rhetorical terms, the "will" of the author becomes the "will" of the address, for it is the author who chooses each word and arranges each part of the work into a whole in order to bring about the intended goal. The authorial imprint on the work is what assures that the parts are, in fact, ordered around a single aim.

For Augustine, too, it is the authorial intent that safeguards the harmony of Scripture. On a number of occasions, Augustine discusses the importance of discerning the authorial intent in order to properly interpret Scripture. For example, in his *De consensu euangelistarum*, normally dated to around 400, Augustine is concerned to defend the harmony of the four Gospels against

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[138] Augustine largely takes it for granted that the intention of the divine author is to bring readers to the contemplation of non-bodily realities.

[139] As Tarmo Toom has pointed out, the Latin rhetorical tradition, which Augustine was intimately familiar with, often considered how to deal with discrepancies in determining the meaning of a given passage. He says that, in such cases, "*uoluntas* was usually favored over *scriptum*, the intended meaning over the lexical/syntactic meaning." Tarmo Toom, "Was Augustine an Intentionalist? Authorial Intention in Augustine's Hermeneutics," *SP* 54, (pp1-10), 2. See Cicero, *Inu.*, 2.42.122-23; Quintilian *Inst.*, 7.6. Cf. Eden, *Hermeneutics*, 56-57. Determining the *uoluntas* of a given text or speech was, therefore, a natural goal Augustine would have learned through his rhetorical training.

[140] Frances Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 21-27.

[141] Most properly, *dispositio* is the Latin for the Greek *taxis* (τάξις), but, as is often the case, the Latin came to carry a broader, more nuanced meaning.

accusations, presumably by pagans or Manichees, that the Gospels are full of inconsistencies and contradictions.[142] Thus, these detractors claim, the gospel accounts must be fabrications, or at the least significant embellishments, crafted by Jesus' followers. Augustine, therefore, sets out in this work to defend the authority of the four gospel accounts by demonstrating the "consensus" or harmony that exists among them.

He begins by explaining some of the minor discrepancies by positing the possibility of different but closely related events, or of human authors recording some facts and omitting others. Finally, however, he is forced to admit that there are differences—in sequence of events or significant details—which must be explained by the human authors remembering the same events differently. This admission, of course, leaves Augustine open to the charge that none of the Gospels can be reliable. However, as Carol Harrison has pointed out, Augustine appeals to the principle in this work that, "what matters is not the 'words' the author uses, but the 'truth' (*ueritas*) or 'intention' (*uoluntatem*) or 'meaning' (*sententia*) conveyed in the words themselves."[143] Harrison explains further, "What matters in seeking knowledge of the truth is what is really meant by the writer, what he has in mind, not the precise words in which he happens to express himself."[144] Indeed, Augustine speaks of the "salutary lesson" (*salubriter dscimus*) learned from his exercise thus far, "that our aim should be nothing else than to ascertain what is the mind and intention of the person who speaks."[145] Again, he clearly states that the

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[142] On the date of this work, see James O'Donell, *Augustine, Confessions* 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 422, n21, where he references A. Mandouze, who dates this work slightly later, around 404-412.

[143] Carol Harrison, "'Not Words but Things': Harmonious Diversity in the Four Gospels," in *Augustine: Biblical Exegete,* ed. Frederick van Fleteren and Joseph C. Schnaubelt (Bern, 2001), 163.

[144] Harrison, "Not Words," 164.

[145] *Cons eu*. 2.12.29 (CSEL 43 130): *ita enim salubriter discimus, nihil aliud esse quarendum, quam quid uelit ille qui loquitur.*

meaning of scripture is found in the authors' *uoluntas*, rather than the *scripta*: "And we ought not to let the wretched quibblers at words fancy that truth must be tied somehow or other to the jots and tittles of letters; whereas the fact is that, not in the matters of words only, but equally in all other signs used by souls, nothing else is to be sought than what the soul itself intended."[146] Therefore, Harrison notes further: "In *De consensu euangelistarum* truth (*ueritas, res*) is always mentioned in the same breath as, and is obviously synonymous with, meaning (*sententia, signum animi*), in other words, the truth of a passage is the same as the author's intended meaning."[147] This is why, in his *De doctrina christiana* he asserts explicitly, "True God-fearers are conscientious about seeking God's will (*deum uoluntatem*) in Scripture."[148]

Conclusion

Augustine's own practice of reading Scripture sheds further light on his view of Scripture. We find that the same themes that characterize *narratio*—temporality and authorial intent—also occupy a central place in his own scriptural reading practice. On the one hand, the temporal quality makes the author's meaning intelligible to human minds conditioned by time; on the other hand, the authorial intent assures that there is harmony of meaning throughout Scripture, which reflects the unity of God himself. The unity of Scripture is reflective of and safeguarded by the very unity of God. By discerning the unified authorial intent running throughout Scripture, the reader is guided beyond the temporal language and events to a truly spiritual understanding. From Aristotle, through Cicero and Quintilian, we have observed that a well-crafted *narratio* has

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[146] *Cons. eu.* 2.28.67 (CSEL 43 172): *ne miseri aucupes uocum apicibus quodammodo litterarum putent ligandam esse ueritatem, cum utique non in uerbis tantum, sed etiam in ceteris omnibus signis animorum non sit nisi ipse animus inquirendus.*

[147] Harrison, "Not Words," 165.

[148] *Doc. chr.* 3.1.1 (CCSL 32 77): *homo timens deum uoluntatem eius in scripturis sanctis diligenter inquirit.*

all the parts working together in harmony. Now we find this same principle playing a pivotal role in Augustine's reading of Scripture.

The Preacher and Scripture

Having considered how *narratio* informs Augustine's understanding of the divine strategy and shapes his reading practice, I return now in this final section to book 4 of *De doctrina christiana* and address Augustine's view of the relationship between the preacher and Scripture. The rhetorical strategy Augustine finds in Scripture cannot be divorced from his understanding of preaching, for the two are very closely related in his thought. His own experience of Scripture was always closely tied to preaching. As priest and bishop, his engagement with Scripture was, first and foremost, as a preacher. Anne-Marie la Bonardiere has rightfully pointed out: "For Augustine his Bible is primarily the Bible of a preacher."[149] It was even through the preaching of Ambrose in Milan that he came to his new understanding of the process involved in reading Scripture in the first place. From Ambrose, he would have learned that preaching stands in a very close relationship to Scripture, since one of the distinguishing marks of Ambrose's sermons is that they are permeated by Scripture. Neil McLynn has commented of Ambrose: "The bishop's constant recourse to Biblical quotation and paraphrase suggests what was truly distinctive about his pastoral style. For Ambrose reproduced in his sermons the texture and rhythm of the Bible itself: his preaching was nothing less than an exercise in scriptural mimesis"[150] This care

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[149] Anne-Marie la Bonardiere, "Augustine: Minister of the Word of God," in *Augustine and the Bible*, ed. Pamela Bright (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 245.

[150] Neil B. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 238. On Ambrose's preaching, see also Frances Young, Lewis Ayres, and Andrew Louth, eds., *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 309-312; D. H. Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Arian-Nicene Conflicts* (Oxford: Clerendon Press, 1995); Craig A. Satterlee, *Ambrose of Milan's Method of Mystagogical Preaching* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press,

Ambrose shows in communicating Scripture to his congregation at Milan is something

Augustine adopts and adapts for his flock in Hippo. It should come as no surprise, then, that he

added a fourth book to *De doctrina christiana* which deals primarily with preaching, nearly 30

years after he wrote the first three on interpreting Scripture.[151]

The close association between Scripture and preaching in his thought has led some

scholars to suggest that the whole of *De doctrina christiana* should be viewed as a book

primarily about preaching. Indeed, in book 4 Augustine frames the preacher and his task in terms

of the divine strategy of revelation he finds at work in Scripture.[152] Still, because of the amount

of time that lapsed between the composition of the first three books and the final book, along

with the shift in focus from hermeneutics to oral presentation, the intention of book 4 is far from

a settled matter in scholarship.[153] In particular, the relationship between the principles of

preaching he outlines in this book and the principles of classical oratory have occupied a central

place in the discussion.[154] At times Augustine appears to advocate a Ciceronian reverence for

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2002); and Steven M. Oberhelman, *Rhetoric and Homiletics in Fourth-Century Christian Literature: Prose Rhythm, Oratical Style, and Preaching in the Works of Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991).

[151] Given the important place of preaching in his thought, it is somewhat surprising that very little work has been done on Augustine's theology of preaching. The single study that tackles this feature of Augustine's thought head-on is Peter Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014).

[152] Augustine wrote the first two books and most of book 3 around 397. He then added a conclusion to book 3 and wrote book 4 in the year 426.

[153] I do not mean to say here that Augustine intends to construct a systematic doctrine of Scripture, but simply that, whatever the work's true aims are, it certainly does reveal his theology of Scripture. Beyond this, the significance of what book 4 says about preaching for the rest of the work is difficult to gauge, since we know very little of North African preaching before Augustine. We know that, typically, only bishops preached, but Cyprian's seven homiletic treatises are the only examples we have to compare Augustine's comments with.

[154] The literature on this work is extensive. For some of the more important studies that interact with the rhetorical influence of this work, see W. H. Arnold and Pamela Bright, eds., *Doctrina Christiana: A Classic of Western Culture* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995); Catherine M. Chin, "The Grammarian's Spoils: *De Doctrina Christiana* and the Contexts of Literary Education," in *Augustine and the Disciplines, from Cassiciacum to Confessions*, ed. Karla Pollmann and Mark Vessey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); G. A. Press, "The Content and Argument of Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*," *Augustiniana* 31 (1981): 165-182.

rhetoric, such as when he recommends that one follow Cicero's three styles—the subdued, the temperate and the grand—to sway the minds of his listeners.[155] However, at other times he seems to go to great lengths to distance the preacher from the orator, as when he calls into question the usefulness of eloquence when compared to truth.[156] What is one to make of this situation? Is the preacher to pattern his delivery after the great classical orators or is he up to something different entirely? And, most importantly for this study, what does this say about the preacher's relationship to Scripture?

Upon a close reading of book 4, it becomes apparent that Augustine is framing the preacher's role within the structure he has just outlined in the previous three books.[157] In other words, he is recommending that the preacher follow the eloquence of Scripture, which he has just expounded upon, rather than that of pagan orators. To be sure, this means employing common rhetorical techniques wherever appropriate, for this is the example one finds in the Bible as well. But there is a significant modification of classical rhetoric that takes place in Augustine's account, which is based on the preacher's relationship to Scripture. The key to this modification, as Peter Sanlon points out, is Augustine's appeal to Scripture as an external authority for the preacher, the guide by which he orients his sermon. It is, therefore, faithfulness to Scripture that should mark the preacher over rhetorical flare.[158] Even though he bemoans the lack of eloquence among preachers, Augustine clearly believes that Scripture, and by extension

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[155] *Doc. chr.* 4.3.

[156] He states that the rhetoric of the preacher is not the rhetoric one learns in the pagan schools (4.2), and even rebukes Cyprian for being overly rhetorical at one point (4.31).

[157] Others have noted that this work seems to have been geared entirely for the preacher. For the two most notable examples, see James O'Donnell, "*De Doctrina*" in *Augustine through the Ages*, ed. Alan Fitzgerald and John Cavadini (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 280; and Fredrick Van Der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop: The Life and Work of a Father of the Church* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1961), 404.

[158] Sanlon, *Augustine's*, 43.

the sermon, has its own, unique eloquence: "For where I understand them [the Scriptures], not only does nothing seem wiser, but nothing seems more eloquent."[159] Thus, the preacher makes use of classical rhetorical techniques but does so only insofar as they are faithful to Scripture. So when Augustine recommends that the preacher adopt Cicero's three styles, he does so with the limitations imposed by Scripture in mind. According to the Ciceronian school, an eloquent orator is to say little things in a subdued style, for the purpose of instructing, moderate things in a temperate style, so as to be pleasing, and great things in a majestic, or grand, style, so that the mind might be swayed.[160] But the Christian preacher never deals with little or moderate things; everything spoken of by the preacher is great. The preacher's use of these styles, then, should follow the way they are used in Scripture, in a manner which depends not on the significance of his subject matter, but rather on the desired response of the hearer. For example, the teacher of Scripture could speak in a subdued tone when teaching, a temperate tone when praising or blaming, and in a forceful tone to sway the mind when speaking of something that is to be done to those who are not yet willing to do it.[161] In each of these cases, the preacher's proximity to Scripture means that his use of classical eloquence is modified.[162]

But the preacher is to use Scripture for more than merely the model and content of his sermon. The eloquence of the preacher requires that he himself participates in the scriptural narrative. Sanlon remarks that this requires a "personal appropriation of Scripture," because the preacher "was to view himself as one who stands within the temporal narrative that is interpreted

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[159] *Doc. chr.* 4.9 (CCSL 32 136): *nam, ubi eos intellego, non solum nihil eis sapientius, uerum etiam nihil eloquentia mihi uideri potest*.

[160] *Doc. chr.* 4.17.34.

[161] *Doc. chr.* 4.19.38.

[162] See Sanlon, *Augustine's*, 43.

by Scripture."[163] It is from within the divine narrative that the preacher can extend that narrative to his congregation, and so assume his role within the strategy of divine revelation. The preacher's eloquence, then, is found by entering into the mystery of Scripture himself.[164] Scripture, therefore, provides the current by which the preacher is included in the temporal flow of God's revelation. From within that flow, the preacher becomes a part of the divine strategy and is able to then serve as a conduit, extending or mediating the revelation of Scripture to the congregation. In this way, preachers become the voice of Christ to their congregations, and so they ought to "express themselves in the same way [as writers of Scripture do], presenting themselves with the same authority."[165]

As a result, the sermon becomes the extension of Scripture, the means by which an audience is included in the divine narrative. Thus, Sanlon comments that just as Scripture "seductively invites listeners to position themselves within its temporal framework,"[166] so also Augustine sought in his sermons for his congregation to be "empowered to feel an appropriate sense of being possessed by Scripture."[167] The preacher's participation in the divine strategy is the key to the audience's inclusion into the divine narrative.

The preacher thus becomes a servant of the divine strategy. Augustine himself comments on his role as preacher a number of times throughout his *Sermones*. He characterizes his role as a

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[163] Sanlon, *Augustine's*, 67.

[164] Sanlon comments, "The preacher is restless for a fresh glimpse of divine truth and his restlessness stirs up others to seek with him. The reality being sought is not immediately or easily available; a journey must be undertaken. As preacher and listeners venture forth together on this journey, they find that the eloquence of Scripture is in itself an aid. It is the beauty and eloquence of Scripture that helps one persevere through confusion and uncertainty caused by obscurity." Sanlon, 68. Cf. *Doc. chr.* 4.9.

[165] *Doc. chr*. 4.8.22 (CCSL 32 135): *tanquam se ipsi exponendos simili auctoritate proponent.*

[166] Sanlon, *Augustine's*, 44.

[167] Sanlon, *Augustine's*, 17.

"servant,"[168] and as both a "shepherd" (*pastor*)[169] to his congregation and a "sheep" (*ouis*)[170] in Christ's flock; through preaching, he functions as a "wet-nurse"[171] for new believers and a "sower" (*seminator*)[172] of the seeds of truth for the faithful; as he expounds Scripture, the Holy Spirit works through him and he becomes Christ's voice to his congregation,[173] his words becoming the "vehicle" (*uehiculum*) of truth.[174] In all of these aspects, his duty as a preacher is to apply the appropriate "medicines from the holy scriptures" (*medicamenta protulit de scripturis sanctis*) to the particular needs of his congregation.[175] In *De doctrina christiana*, Augustine explains that this duty of the preacher can be summed up in the task of teaching Scripture faithfully. The preacher must teach truth, refute error, instruct, exhort and rouse as is required by the audience, and in all cases to speak with wisdom.[176] Thus Peter Brown has commented, "Augustine was certain of his basic role. It was not to stir up emotion: it was to distribute food. The Scriptural idea of 'baking bread', of 'feeding the multitude', but expounding the Bible, an idea already rich with complex associations, is central to Augustine's view of himself as a

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[168] *Serm*. 430A.

[169] *Serm*. 46.1 (CCSL 41 529; Hill, 2:263).

[170] *Serm*. 296.13 (MA 1 410; Hill 8:211).

[171] *Serm*. 353.1.

[172] *Serm*. 150.1 (PL 38 808; Hill 5:30). Cf. *serm.* 53A.1, 5.

[173] *Serm*. 152.2; *serm.* 153.1; *serm.* 17.1.

[174] *Serm*. 28.5 (CCSL 41 371; Hill 2:113). Cf. *serm.* 187.2; *serm.* 237.4.

[175] *Serm*. 32.1 (CCSL 41 398; Hill 2:137).

[176] *Doc. chr*. 4.4.6 – 4.5.7. It is important to remember the fact that most members of the congregation were unable to read Scripture for themselves, whether due to illiteracy or the scarcity of copies of the written texts, or both. The preacher was very often the only exposure to Scripture one would have.

preacher."[177] In other words, Augustine saw the preacher's role as extending the spiritual

nourishment of Scripture which he himself had already fed on to his congregation.

Within this role, Augustine recommends that each preacher employ the devices of

rhetorical eloquence as he sees fit and is able, at all times teaching clearly, delighting through

beauty, and moving by persuasiveness.[178] But any rhetorical skills a preacher may possess must

ultimately conform to the unique eloquence of Scripture. Augustine is aware that there might be

someone who is not moved by the power of truth, and who requires the power of eloquence to be

convinced.[179] But this is only done to bring them around to see the truth. Every preacher will

differ in style and ability, some possessing very little eloquence at all. In such cases, one's

manner of living may serve as an eloquent sermon. Or, if one lacks the ability of composition but

not of delivery, it is acceptable for such a one to deliver from memory the composition of

another. "For in this way many become preachers of truth (which is certainly desirable), and yet

they are not different teachers, for all deliver the discourse which the one real teacher has

composed, and so there are no divisions among them."[180]

Put in this light, book 4 is not as much about the preacher's use of rhetorical techniques

as it is about the preacher's relationship to Scripture. This is the key component in Augustine's

understanding of the preacher's role as mediator of Scripture to his congregation. Unless the

preacher has himself entered into the divine *narratio* of Scripture, he cannot extend it to his

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[177] Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press; revised edition, 2000), 249.

[178] These are the three aims of the orator identified by Cicero. For a very concise but helpful discussion, see Serge Lancel, *St. Augustine*, trans. Antonia Nevill (London: SCM Press, 2002), 461-63.

[179] *Doc. chr*. 4.13.29.

[180] *Doc. chr*. 4.29.63 (CCSL 32 167): *multi praedicatores ueritatis fiunt, nec multi magistri, si unius ueri magistri idipsum dicant omnes, et non sint in eis schismata.*

congregation. It is the preacher's task to mediate Scripture to his audience such that the sermon is part of the whole process of revelation. In this way, the preacher becomes Scripture to his congregation, and so Augustine's theology of preaching is intimately bound up with and sheds further light on his theology of Scripture.

Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that *narratio* serves as the means by which Augustine makes sense of the divine strategy he finds at work in Scripture, which allows temporally-bound human beings to catch a glimpse of the eternal God through the harmony of his temporal revelation. I have identified temporality and authorial intent as the two central features of *narratio* that enabled it to be moulded in a number of different contexts and used to a variety of different ends. These same two features, I have noted, figure prominently in how Augustine portrays the spiritual character of Scripture, how he describes the way to properly read Scripture, and how he understands the role of the preacher in relation to Scripture. The rhetorical notion of *narratio*, as the strategic sequencing of events, therefore provided Augustine with an able and ready-made tool to make sense of the layered communicative strategy he found at work in Scripture, while upholding and aiding its fundamentally spiritual character. By attending to the divine *narratio* of Scripture, the reader participates in a spiritual process through which, by divine grace, they pass beyond the confines of time and space and come to contemplate eternal truth. [181] This chapter serves, then, as the foundation upon which the remainder of this thesis will be built; it provides

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[181] There is an excellent example of this at work in his introductory comments to the psalms of ascents, where he instructs his audience, saying, "When you hear of the mountain, do not think of elevated ground; when you hear of a rock or a stone, do not let your mind conjure up something flinty; when you hear Christ called a lion, do not suppose that he is fierce; and when you hear of a lamb, do not picture an animal to yourself. In himself he is none of these things, but he became all of them for you. He is the starting point of your ascent and the goal of your ascent." *En. Ps.* 119.1.

the broad framework of my study in which the more detailed examinations of Augustine's

application of Scripture in particular contexts will be placed.

3
PERSUADING THE WILL OF THE CATECHUMENS

Having set out the broad contours of Augustine's spiritual theology of Scripture in the previous

chapter, I turn now in this and the following two chapters to look more closely at his application

of Scripture to those at three progressive stages of the spiritual maturation process. In the present

chapter, I examine how Augustine applies Scripture to the catechumens, who represent the first

of these stages, and I consider how his use of Scripture at this stage reflects further his reliance

on *narratio* as a central feature in his understanding of Scripture.[1] While he does hold that

conveying the content of the Christian faith is vitally important to ensure that these new believers

adhere to correct doctrine, Augustine also recognizes that merely transmitting data is not

sufficient to facilitate the catechumens' spiritual growth; they must first have the desire to know

God and be convinced that true spiritual growth takes place within the life of the Church. Thus, I

contend, at this initial stage Augustine's goal is to persuade the catechumens of the Catholic

Church's unique position as the locus of salvation. His teaching throughout the catechumenate,

then, must be read with his distinct polemical and apologetic aims in mind. Furthermore, I claim

he makes his argument by utilizing the most basic, four-fold judicial speech pattern he would

have known from his training in rhetoric and which would have been especially well-suited to

accommodate his aims.[2] In this initial stage of one's journey of faith, therefore, he uses Scripture

in a manner akin to the role of *narratio* in a judicial oration.

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[1] As a trained orator, Augustine was well aware of the importance of tailoring his message with the particular audience in mind. See his explicit mention of having to do this in *serm.* 361.4.

[2] As mentioned in the previous chapter, there was a wide variation when it comes to dividing orations into parts. However, while a six-fold structure was probably the most common, the four-fold structure was the foundation for them all, in both the Greek and Latin traditions.

I will make my case by way of three main sections. In the first section, I set the context for Augustine's project in two primary ways. First, by briefly sketching the progressive stages within the catechumenate at Hippo, I show how the entire catechumenate, spanning from initial inquiry to baptism, forms a distinct and unified stage in one's spiritual journey. Second, by considering some important themes within Christian catechesis that Augustine would have known, I set the backdrop against which the unique points of Augustine's strategy can be appreciated. With this context in mind, I turn in the final two sections to discuss Augustine's strategy directly. First, I engage in a close reading of *De catechizandis rudibus*, which, I claim, reveals Augustine beginning to construct an argument for the Church based on the standard judicial speech pattern. However, I also conclude that Augustine's argument is incomplete. To find an answer for why this is so, I look next at the only other place where we know he addresses the catechumens in a direct and extended way—his sermons to the *comptetentes* during Lent. Upon examination of these sermons, I make the case that they contain the missing elements from the argument he began in *De catechizandis rudibus* and should, therefore, be seen as the second half of his argument. Therefore, these two points give shape to the catechumenate as a sustained argument for the character of the Catholic Church. It is within this structure of communication, then, that Scripture functions as a *narratio* would in its judicial sense.

The Context of Augustine's Catechesis

In order to appreciate the sophisticated strategy I claim is at work in Augustine's catechetical instruction, it is important to place it within its proper liturgical and theological contexts. The liturgical context is important because it provides the structure of the catechumenate as a whole; there is a progression that one goes through as a catechumen, which, we will see, Augustine

incorporates into his strategy and exploits to his desired end. The theological context is important

because it provides a backdrop against which the points of continuity and difference between

Augustine's practice and that of the broader patristic tradition can be appreciated. Both of these

aspects are significant, therefore, for determining what Augustine is trying to do in his

catechetical instruction and for appreciating the significance of how he uses Scripture to do it.

The Liturgical Context

The catechumenate was structured around three successive stages, which were intended to

culminate in one's entrance into the Church through baptism.[3] The first stage consisted of initial

inquiry. Those at this stage were not catechumens, properly speaking, but were called *accidentes*

or *rudes*, because they often had little to no previous understanding of Church teaching. They

were inquirers into the faith, seeking initial instruction in the basic teachings of Christianity to

see if they warranted assent. It is a unique example of an address given to those at this first stage

of the catechumenate that we find in Augustine's *De catechizandis rudibus*. According to

Augustine, the challenges the catechist faced at this point were twofold: first, he must ascertain

the inquirer's motives, and second, he must provide an adequate introduction to the rudiments of

the Christian faith that would prove to be compelling to the inquirer: "[I]t is decidedly useful to

inform ourselves beforehand of the newcomer's state of mind and of the motives that have

influenced him to take up our religion."[4] And if one has come with a desire to merely appear

religious, Augustine goes on, it is up to the catechist to construct the oration in such a way as to

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[3] In this section, I rely on the reconstruction of the catecumenate offered by William Harmless in "Catechumens" in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. ed. Alan Fitzgerald and John Cavadini (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 147-148, as well as the discussion of different stages and rites found throughout William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995).

[4] *Cat. rud.* 5.9 (CCSL 46 129; Canning, 73): *utile est sane, ut praemoneamur antea, si fieri potest, ab his qui eum norunt, in quo statu animi sit, uel quibus causis commotus ad suscipiendam religionem uenerit.*

"bring him [the inquirer] to the point that he actually enjoys being the kind of person that he wishes to appear."[5] It is the inquirer's desire that is especially important for Augustine. If one has come with a misguided desire for worldly pleasures or material wealth, Augustine recommends that the catechist "reprove him" as "an inexperienced newcomer" and "give him a glowing account of the goal of Christian teaching in all its truth" so he will see the truth of Christianity and have his desire transformed.[6] Already at this early stage of the catechumens' development, then, we can see that Augustine is concerned to not merely inform but, more importantly, to persuade or convince his audience of the proper desire they are to have. By carefully ascertaining the inquirer's motives, the catechist is able to tailor his speech in such a way that it would present a convincing case to the inquirer.

Once they were instructed in the rudiments of the faith, and were deemed to have genuine motives, they would enter the second stage, where they became catechumens (*catechumeni* or, most often for Augustine, *audientes*).[7] Entrance into the catechumenate was a significant step in Augustine's estimation. It required that the inquirer begin initiation into the Church, which included a number of rites, such as the laying-on of hands, a signing of the cross on the forehead, and a taste of salt.[8] He speaks of these rites as a shadow and foretaste of the sacraments of

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[5] *Cat. rud.* 5.9 (CCSL 46 129; Canning, 73): *faciamus eum delectari esse se talem, qualem uideri cupit.*

[6] *Cat. rud.* 5,9 (CCSL 46 129; Canning, 73): *reprehendendo tamquam rudem et ignarum, . . . facias eum uelle quod aut per errorem aut per simulationem nondum uolebat.* There were, presumably, quite a number of new converts to the Church during this time as a result of the Christian imperial order established by the Theodosian Code. Under such circumstances, however, many may have had less than genuine motives for wanting to enter the Church. Motives of material gain, or desire for social and professional status (even survival), may have caused people either to pretend that they wished to become Christians or to seek admission to the catechumenate for the wrong reasons. See *cat. rud.* 17.26.

[7] C*atechumenus* is the Latinized version of the Greek term, *katecheo* (κατηχέω), which means 'to teach orally'. It first appears in North African literature in Tertullian's *Praescr.* 41, and also in the *Martyrdom of Perpetua*. See *serm.* 132.1, where Augustine defines the term *catechumenus* as *audiens,* or "hearer."

[8] *Cat. rud.* 26.50.

initiation; those who successfully entered the catechumenate were conceived in the womb of the Church, Augustine taught, and could from then on call themselves Christians.[9] At this stage, they would attend Church along with the rest of the congregation, but they would be dismissed before the liturgy of the Eucharist. They were not yet privy to the central teachings and rites of the Church—the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, or the Eucharist itself—until they decided to take the formal step of entrance into the Church through baptism.[10] Our knowledge of what special instruction, if any, those in this second stage received in Hippo is a matter of conjecture. They would have been sitting among Augustine's congregation during most of his sermons, but they were, by and large, simply there as observers, and we have very little to go on to say more than that.[11]

After the appropriate time, which normally lasted for two or three years, the catechumen would be admitted as a candidate for baptism.[12] This initiated the third stage, during which candidates, called *competentes* by Augustine, were required to memorize and recite both the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer, as well as participate in a number of rites of initiation.[13]

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[9] *Serm.* 160C.1. See Harmless, *Augustine*, 151.

[10] The practice of dismissing the catechumens before the liturgy of the Eucharist was a common tradition, known by scholars as the *disciplina arcani*, or "discipline of secrecy." Augustine references this practice a number of times. See especially, *Jo. ev. tr.* 96.3, *en. Ps.* 103.14, and *en. Ps.* 80.8. He also makes reference to this practice on two occasions in his *Sermones ad populum.* In *serm.* 86.1, he comments that not everyone sitting in his congregation knows what Christians profess. Similarly, in *serm.* 90 he says that only the faithful (i.e. not the catechumens) "know about the wedding of the king's son and the banquet it was celebrated with" (Hill, 3:447).

[11] Harmless has suggested that, throughout all of his sermons, there are at least 22 occasions where Augustine addresses the catechumens in some capacity. Harmless, "Catechumens," 147.

[12] In *f. et. op.* 6.9, Augustine explains that the long process before one was admitted to baptism served the purpose of allowing one "to hear what the faith and pattern of Christian life should be." We are not given any further indication of what form such an education might have taken at this stage, other than by their sitting in on the sermons Augustine preached.

[13] The distinction between ordinary catechumens and those preparing for baptism was recognized throughout the patristic period. In the Greek East, the distinction was made by calling those preparing for baptism *photizomenoi* (those being illuminated), and in Rome they were often called *electi* (chosen ones). In most other places in the Latin West, and certainly throughout Augustine's works, they are usually referred to as *competentes* (petitioners).

Augustine tells the *competentes* that they are called such because they are "seeking together"

(*simul petentes*) to enter the house of the Lord and to contemplate the delight of the Lord all the

days of their lives.[14] They are those who are being revived from death, as they long for the

kingdom of heaven and learn to forsake the things of this world.[15] During their time as

competentes, they would undergo rigorous preparation. They were expected to fast daily until

mid-afternoon, as well as to abstain from all meat, wine, bathing, and sexual activity.[16]

Furthermore, they would attend all-night prayer vigils, and they were expected to give alms to

the poor.[17] They would also undergo at least one exorcism known as the scrutiny, in which they

would spend the night praying and at some point be led in front of the assembly and stripped of

their tunics. There would be some kind of physical examination, which would be followed by an

exorcist performing a number of rituals intended to rid them of any demonic presence.[18]

Competentes were also given special catechetical instruction. We do not know the full extent or

frequency of the instruction that took place in Hippo during this stage, but a handful of

Augustine's sermons preached to the *competentes* have been preserved which gives us a

significant indication of how Augustine approached catechesis at this third stage.[19] During this

rigorous training, Augustine teaches them that they were being knit together in the Church's

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[14] *Serm*. 216.1 (PL 38 1076).

[15] *Serm*.212.1.

[16] *Ep.* 54.9; *mor.* 2.13.39; *serm.* 207.2.

[17] *Serm.* 206.2.

[18] Augustine does not describe this process in any detail, but he does allude to it on a number of occasions. See *serm.* 227; *serm.* 229.1; *serm.* 216; *serm.* 398.2. Quodvultdeus, a younger contemporary of Augustine, describes the event in greater detail in his work, *De symbolo.*

[19] There are accounts of *competentes* receiving instruction lasting for a number of hours every day, such as those at the church in Jerusalem, for example. Egeria, *Per.* 46. However, we cannot say for certain what Augustine's practice was in Hippo.

womb.[20] On the Saturday, two weeks before Easter, the *competentes* would go through a ceremony known as the *traditio symboli*, in which they were 'handed over' the creed. Augustine would recite the creed and give a sermon explaining its meaning. Then, over the following week, the *competentes* would be expected to memorize it and Augustine would test their ability to do so. This was important because they were required to go through a process of 'handing back' the creed at the Easter vigil, where they would recite it before the gathered assembly. One week before the vigil, perhaps on the same day that Augustine tested their memory of the creed, the *competentes* were handed the Lord's Prayer (*traditio orationis dominicae*). Matthew 6:7-15 would be read and Augustine would give a sermon on it, usually commenting on it phrase by phrase. As with the creed, the *competentes* were expected to recite the Lord's Prayer from memory before the congregation. We also know that Augustine would give a sermon on Holy Saturday, instructing the *competentes* on the mystery of baptism.[21] This would complete the catechumens' pre-baptismal training.

Thus, each of these three progressive stages of the catechumenate work together in a single process which leads to baptism, the point at which the catechumens would become fully initiated into the Church. The catechist's role in this process is to guide the catechumens through these stages by appealing not only to their intellect, but, more importantly, by appealing to their

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[20] *Serm.* 216.7.

[21] Harmless has pointed out that there were diverse practices when it came to this. Some, like Cyril of Jerusalem and Ambrose, would not explain baptism until after one had participated in the rite, while others, such as Theodore of Mopsuestia and John Chrysostom, explained baptism prior to its celebration. While none of Augustine's sermons to the *competentes* explaining baptism survive, we do know from a passing reference to it in *serm.* 229A.1 that Augustine preached on it before the *competentes* were baptised. See also, Georges Touton, "La méthode catéchétique de St Cyille de Jérusalem compare à celles de St Augustin et de Théodore de Mopsuestia"; J.-B. Allard, "La nature du *De catechizandis rudibus* de s. Augustin" (Rome: Pontificia Universitas Lateranensis Facultas Theologiae, 1976).

will. It is not enough to teach inquiring minds about the basic tenets of Christianity; they must be *convinced* to enter the Catholic Church.

The Theological Context

In addition to the liturgical context, it is important to consider what Augustine teaches the catechumens and how he does it against the backdrop of other Christian catechetical practices as well. Dating back to its Jewish roots, Christian catechesis had for a long time been structured around a historical framework.[22] This we will find present in Augustine as well. Still, by the end of the fourth century, Christian catechesis had undergone a number of important developmental phases in which the themes and emphases drawn from Christianity's historical sweep shifted somewhat. To be sure, one must heed Paul Bradshaw's warning not to overlook the diversity in early Christian liturgical practice by finding too much uniformity within the catechetical tradition of the first three centuries.[23] Nevertheless, there are some important trends worth noting. William Harmless has rightfully pointed out that the third century catechumenate was, by and large, characterized by a highly rigorist disposition.[24] Because Christians at this time comprised a cultural minority, there was an acute awareness of the need for the Christian to resist and be set apart from the prevailing culture. Tertullian, for example, wrote to the catechumens that they must be aware that they inhabit a demon possessed world: "There is no place—whether streets or marketplace or baths or taverns or even our own homes—that is completely free of idols: Satan

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[22] See Harmless, *Augustine,* 127; and Everett Ferguson, *The Early Church at Work and Worship – Volume 2: Catechesis, Baptism, Eschatology, and Martyrdom* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 43.

[23] Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy* (2nd ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[24] Harmless, *Augustine*, 40-51.

and his angels have filled the whole world."[25] In contrast to such a world, he insisted that the catechumens must distinguish themselves by reflecting a high level of morality.

For Tertullian, the catechumenate was central for the moral formation of the Christian. To those who thought they could avoid the high moral demands of the Christian life by putting off baptism until very late in life, Tertullian emphasized the fact that morality was not something magically imparted by the waters of baptism; instead, it was forged in the rigor of the catechumenate. "We are not baptized so that we may cease committing sin," he argued, "but because we have ceased, we are already clean of heart. This, surely, is the first baptism of the catechumen."[26] Putting off baptism, therefore, did not relinquish one from the moral demands of the Christian life. As he famously quipped, "Christians are made not born" (*fiunt non nascantur Christiani*).[27] The rite of baptism, important as it was for him, did not itself cleanse the sinner; rather, it was in the catechumenate that the Christian was formed.

When we turn to fellow North African, Cyprian of Carthage, we are able to catch a precious glimpse into the actual content of third century catechesis in North Africa.[28] His catechetical handbook, *Ad Quirinum*, is an important work for this study, since we know that Augustine read and knew it well.[29] In this work, Cyprian offers a set of doctrinal and moral

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[25] *Spect.* 8.9. (CCSL 1 238): *Ceterum et plateae et forum et balneae et stabula et ipsae domus nostrae sine idolis omnino non sunt: totum saeculum satanas et angeli eius repleuerunt.* Quoted in Harmless, *Augustine*, 46.

[26] *Paen.* 6.17 (CCSL 1 331): *Non ideo abluimur ut delinquere desinamus sed quia desiimus, quoniam iam corde loti sumus.*

[27] *Paen.* 6.17 (CCSL 1 331). Quoted in Harmless, *Augustine*, 41.

[28] On Cyprian's catechumenate, see Ady Alexis-Baker, "*Ad Quirinum* Book Three and Cyprian's Catechumenate," *JECS* 17 (2009): 357-80; Alistair Stewart-Sykes, "Catechumenate and Contra-Culture: The Social Process of Catechumenate in Third Century Africa and Its Development," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 47 (2003): 289-306. See also Alan Kreider, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 29-32; Charles Bobertz, "An Analysis of *Vita Cypriani* 3.6-10 and the Attribution of *Ad Quirinum* to Cyprian of Carthage," *VC* 46 (1992): 112-28.

[29] He comments on this work directly in two places: *c. ep. Pel.* 4.21-27; *corrept.* 7.12.

headings, under which he collects a number of relevant biblical passages. The 24 headings in

book 1 speak of the Church as a replacement for Israel; the 30 headings of book 2 concern the

person and work of Jesus; and book 3 contains 120 headings which deal with a variety of moral

issues. While his concern for correct doctrine and his systematic use of the Bible are worth

noting, it is especially worthwhile to observe how he gives greater weight to issues of morality

than to issues of doctrine. There are more than twice as many headings under which he deals

with issues of morality than those where he is concerned with questions of doctrine. This further

reflects the observation that third century catechesis placed a great deal of emphasis on teaching

catechumens how to live lives that reflect the biblical standard of morality.

The rigorist tone running through third century catechesis would become somewhat

softened in the fourth century, after Christianity's official toleration under Constantine. The

prevalence of evil in every corner of society was not as pronounced as Christians ceased to be

the significant minority they were in the third century. The new challenge became how to absorb

the growing numbers of catechumens that were entering the Church as Christianity came to

exercise a more prominent influence in society. The result was a less personalized and more

formalized structure to the catechumenate. With the doctrinal debates that grew out of Nicaea

and Constantinople, there came to be a greater emphasis placed on teaching correct doctrine to

the catechumens. This is not to say that doctrine was devalued in earlier catechesis, but that, with

doctrinal conversations becoming more public, the catechumens needed to be prepared to defend

the Catholic faith on the streets and in the bathhouses.[30] If third century catechesis was marked

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[30] In *De deitate Filii et Spiritus sancti*, Gregory of Nyssa comments: "If you ask anyone for change, he will discuss with you whether the Son is begotten or unbegotten. If you ask about the quality of bread, you will receive the answer that 'the Father is greater, the Son is less'. If you suggest that you require a bath, you will be told that 'there was nothing before the Son was created'." Quoted in W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 636.

by its emphasis on rigorist morality, fourth century catechesis was marked by a creedal, or

doctrinal, emphasis.

For a number of catechists, creedal formulations became the "syllabus" for their

catechetical instruction.[31] Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 313-386) explained that using the Jerusalem

Creed provided a systematic approach to catechesis, much like is required for the sound

construction of a building:

> Catechising is a kind of building: if we do not bind the house together by regular bonds in
> the building, lest some gap be found, and the building become unsound, even our former
> labour is of no use. But stone must follow stone by course, and corner match with corner,
> and by our smoothing off inequalities the building must thus rise evenly. In like manner
> we are bringning to you stones, as it were, of knowledge. . . . But unless you fit them
> together in the one whole, and remember what is first, and what is second, the builder
> may build, but you will find the building unsound.[32]

His method of constructing a catechetical building was to teach his audience the creed, providing

scriptural proofs for each line.[33] Theodore of Mopsuestia similarly structured his catechesis by

the creed, stating that it contains the central mysteries of the Christian faith in condensed form,

and so serves as a ready-made guide for the catechist's expositions on each line.[34]

Yet, an emphasis on moral formation is still detectible in other Christian leaders, even in

Ambrose's catechumenate in Milan. In contrast to some of his contemporaries, Ambrose did not

use the creed to guide catechumens through the fundamentals of the Christian faith prior to

baptism. Instead, he used exegetical sermons. He tells us that he preferred to preach on the moral

interpretation of the Old Testament for the candidates' Lenten training. In a sermon he preached

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[31] Harmless. *Augustine*, 94.

[32] *Procat.* 11 (NPNF 2/7:73).

[33] For example, see *catechesis* 5.12.

[34] *Cat.* 12.1; 1.7; *cat.* 1.13.

during the Octave, Ambrose looks back and explains to the neophytes what his strategy was in their Lenten training:

> We have given a daily sermon on morals, when the deeds of the Patriarchs or the precepts of the Proverbs were read, in order that, being informed and instructed by them, you might become accustomed to enter upon the ways of our forefathers and to pursue their road, and to obey the divine commands, whereby renewed by baptism you might hold to the manner of life which befits those who are washed.[35]

Ambrose, then, retained the emphasis on moral instruction in the catechumenate, but he combined it with his own exegetical style. His emphasis on the Bible is reminiscent of Cyprian; but while Cyprian used Scripture to collect support for a systematized treatment of Christian doctrine and morality, Ambrose preferred a more organic approach in which he provided instruction throughout the course of his homilies. He certainly did consider the creed to be important for conveying the central doctrines, and he would offer a single session of instruction on it and would see that the candidates memorized it. However, the far more prominent strand running through the catechesis in Milan is the double emphasis on morality and exegesis.

Augustine, we will see, takes up Ambrose's concern with Scripture as the source for his instruction but develops it in his own, unique way. However, moral overtones are noticeably lacking throughout his teaching to the catechumens, and a sharp polemical edge is found in its place. The moral and doctrinal formation Augustine's predecessors sought through Scripture and in contrast to society became, in Augustine's hands, an affective formation forged by Scripture in contrast to the Donatists.

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[35] *Myst.* 1 (CSEL 73 89): *De moralibus cottidianum sermonem habuimus, cum vel patriarcharum gesta vel proverbiorum legerentur praecepta, ut his informati atque instituti adsuesceretis maiorum ingredi vias eorum que iter carpere ac divinis oboedire oraculis, quo renovati per baptismum eius vitae usum teneretis, quae ablutos deceret.* Quoted in Harmless, *Augustine*, 94.

Conclusion

Based on the structure of his catechumenate and on the practice of Christians who went before him, we are in a better position to appreciate Augustine's catechetical strategy. The structure of his catechumenate helps us to situate and better understand the immediate context of both *De catechizandis rudibus* and his sermons to the *competentes* as two points within a stage along a progressive spiritual journey. The tradition of catechesis into which Augustine fits provides points of comparison and contrast with the preceding tradition, giving us hints as to where Augustine is modifying the tradition to suit his own purposes. This context will help to give greater precision to our understanding of his strategy and the place of Scripture within that strategy. It is to an examination of his strategy that we turn to next.

De catechizandis rudibus

Let us begin by examining how Augustine addresses those who are in the very first stage of inquiry in *De catechizandis rudibus*, for it is here where his argument begins.[36] In this work, Augustine responds to a request by Deogratias, a deacon of Carthage, to provide advice on how to construct a catechetical oration.[37] In particular, Deogratias is concerned to know how to construct a *narratio* that is faithful to the whole scope of salvation history. He wants to know where to begin and where to end his *narratio*, as well as whether to include an *exhortatio* in his speech or not. One of the reasons why he is asking for advice, he admits, is because he often finds himself displeased with the orations he gives to inquiring minds.[38] Augustine writes *De*

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[36] The best recent treatment of *cat. rud.* is still chapter 4 of Harmless, *Augustine.*

[37] Though it cannot be said for sure, it does appear that this is the same Deogratias that Augustine corresponds with in *ep.* 102.

[38] *Cat. rud.* 1.1.

catechizandis rudibus around the year 403 in response to these questions.[39] The work itself consists of two main parts. In the first part (3.5-14.22), he provides some initial advice in direct response to Deogratias's questions, and in the second part (15.23-27.55), he offers two sample orations, the first much lengthier than the second.[40]

Studies of this work to date have largely focused on what it reveals about Augustine's pedagogical techniques.[41] This is certainly a very important aspect of the work. However, when placed within the liturgical and theological context outlined above, it becomes an important text for tracing how Augustine makes use of Scripture within the first stage of the spiritual maturation process as well. The goal of the catechist, we will recall, is to guide the catechumen through the process of the transformation of will or desire and lead them to entrance into the Church through baptism. In this light, catechesis becomes an act of persuasion, in which the catechist constructs a convincing argument intended to move one's will to take the step of entering the Church.

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[39] For this date, see the arguments of P.-M. Hombert, *Nouvelles recherches de chronologie augustinienne* (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2000), 41–44.

[40] Augustine's second and much shorter example is, in almost every significant respect, a condensed version of this longer example. Therefore, I will limit my discussion to the longer example alone.

[41] See Eugene Kevane, *Augustine the Educator: A Study in the Fundamentals of Christian Formation* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1964), 235-243; Raymond Canning, "Mark God's Humility: The Humility of God and the Humility of the Teacher, Augustine's *De Catechizandis Rudibus*" in *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church IV: The Spiritual Life* ed. Wendy Mayer, Pauline Allen, and Lawrence Cross (Strathfield, NSW: St. Paul's Publications, 2006), 311-325. For an older study, see R. Cordovani,"Il 'De Catechizandis Rudibus' di S. Agostino. Questioni di contenuto e di stile," *Augustinianum* 6 (1966): 489–527. From a pastoral perspective, the standard work is Frederick van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, trans. B. Battershaw and G. Lamb (London: Sheed and Ward, 1961), 453–467; on the social history of *cat. rud.*, see P. Siniscalco, "Sulla composizione delle comunità cristiane in Africa all'inizio del V secolo secondo il *De catechizandis rudibus* di Agostino," *Augustinianum* 33 (1993): 437–447. Brian Stock also makes some useful theoretical observations on the treatise in *Augustine the Reader* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 181–190.

The Structure of a Judicial Argument

In his study of Augustine's doctrine of the two cities, Johannes van Oort has shown that

pedagogy, and especially catechesis, is very closely associated with apologetics and polemics for

Augustine.[42] I have already noted that it is important to recognize that, when Augustine teaches

the rudiments of the Christian faith, he is making an argument in which he defends the Church

against accusations and makes counter arguments against her detractors. Since this is the case,

the most naturally well suited means of accomplishing this goal is the judicial speech pattern, for

this pattern was designed specifically for the purpose of making one's case in the court of law. In

De partitione oratoria, Cicero outlines how the four foundational parts of a judicial speech

pattern—*exordium, narratio, confirmatio,* and *paroratio*—each contain specific elements which

contribute to a sound argument.[43] The *exordium* introduced the speech, but it was to be

constructed in such a way as to render the audience well-disposed, attentive and receptive. Next,

in the *narratio* one would rehearse a biased account of 'the facts of the case'. This served as the

first half of the main body of the speech and introduced the audience to a particular way of

looking at the events under question. Then, in the *confirmatio*, the second half of the main body,

one would provide the logical proofs of the case being made in order to lend credibility to the

narratio. Here, Cicero argues, one should include the *refutatio*, a key piece of the argument

where one would respond to objections of one's opponent. Finally, one would conclude with the

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[42] Johannes van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon: A Study into Augustine's City of God and the Sources of his Doctrine of the Two Cities* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), esp. 175-198.

[43] The number of divisions Cicero makes in a speech varies in different works. In *De inuentione*, he offers the standard six divisions (*exordium*, *propositio*, *partitio*, *confirmatio*, *refutatio*, and *peroratio*). In the *De oratore*, he lists five divisions (*exordium, narratio, confirmatio, refutatio,* and *paroratio*). In *De partitione oratoriae*, he further reduces the divisions to the fundamental four by subsuming the *refutatio* within the *confirmatio*. In *De oratore*, he defends the conflation of *confirmatio* and *refutatio*, saying, "because what is alleged on one side cannot be refuted until you confirm your own statements, and your statements cannot be confirmed until you refute the allegations on the other side, these matters are united both by their nature, by their object, and by their mode of treatment." *Orat.* 2.81.

peroratio, which was intended to rouse the audience in favour of the author's position by way of

an *enumeratio*, an *indignatio*, and a *conquestio*. When all these elements are placed together, one

is able to make a persuasive case. This pattern is, of course, a textbook outline of a basic judicial

oration, but, as Caroline Humfress has shown, its value for constructing a coherent argument

extended beyond the context of the law courts and came to exercise a powerful influence on

theological discourse as well.[44] Of particular note, it appears to have been used in Christian

apologetic works, most notably in Minucius Felix's *Octavius* and Clement of Alexandria's

Exhortatio ad Graecos.[45] These cases, in which the Christian orator becomes something of an

advocate speaking on behalf of Christ and his Church, serve as the precedent for Augustine's

reliance on this same pattern in his catechetical addresses.

There are two basic tasks one must accomplish in a standard judicial argument. The first

task is description, which belongs most properly to the *narratio*. The description should not only

include a statement of the facts of the case, but, more importantly, it should also entail an

account of the defendant's character. Judicial process was largely concerned with making cleaer

a pattern of behaviour in order to establish the character of the defendant, either as one who was

likely or unlikely to commit the crime in question.[46] In his analysis of judicial rhetoric, Cicero

devotes a significant amount of space to providing a detailed list of all the headings under which

one's character should be described, what he describes as the "attributes given to persons"

(*attributa personis*).[47] His list includes: one's name (*nomen*), nature (*natura*), race (*natio*), way

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[44] Caroline Humfress, *Orthodoxy and the Courts in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[45] Harmless, *Augustine*, 25, n. 61.

[46] See Matthew Kempshall, *Rhetoric and the Writing of History, 400-1500* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).

[47] *Inu*. 1.24.34.

of life (*uictus*), fortune (*fortuna*), constant disposition (*habitus*), temporary disposition (*affectio*), committed mental activity (*studium*), purpose or intent (*consilium*), deeds (*facta*), circumstances (*casus*), and what has been said (*orationes*). Judicial narratives require a combination of narrating what has been done (*narratio rei gestae*) with a depiction of character (*ethologia*). Because a case being made from past events cannot ever be proven conclusively, establishing the character of the person in question—whether good or bad—was vital for one's argument. To determine what something is requires it to be defined. This is a task that belongs to description. The question of whether or not the defendant is guilty of murder, for example, depends in large part on whether or not he displays the characteristics that define a murderer. The description of *narratio*, therefore, serves the purpose of definition.

The second task in constructing a convincing judicial argument involves making a qualitative judgement of the facts which have been described. This requires a discussion of what is good or bad, just or unjust, and an evaluation of the case in this light. This task would normally be accomplished by the use of legal witness (*testimonium*) and through logical argument, both of which belong to the *confirmatio*. It was widely held that testimony taken from history and *exempla* of antiquity is most effective for this task because they avoid the possible corruption and partiality one often finds in human witnesses. If used well, one's legal witness would provide the necessary proof to make plain the convincing logic of one's case. If one's *narratio* described the defendant's character as resembling a murderer, for example, the *confirmatio* should leave the judge thinking that that characterization makes sense. In other words, the *confirmatio* was intended to establish the credibility of the *narratio*.

These two components—the *narratio* and *confirmatio*—represent the two foundational parts of a sound argument. In order for the argument to be convincing, both parts must be

present. One cannot narrate one's case without providing justification for that *narratio*. Similarly, one cannot provide proofs for a narrative that has not been given. Each part serves as half of the complete argument.

An Argument for Character

Since the basic four-fold judicial speech pattern, structured around the *narratio* and *confirmatio*, proved useful for structuring arguments in general, it is highly probable that Augustine would have used this pattern for constructing arguments as well. One does not have to search through Augustine's corpus very hard to find his indebtedness to the Latin rhetorical tradition, and to Cicero in particular. As a schoolboy in North Africa, he would have read the great Roman orator widely, and would have certainly continued to do so as he progressed through the study of the "books of eloquence" (*libros eloquentiae*) in his own rhetorical training. He explicitly acknowledges the influence of Cicero on his turn to philosophy, and his influence is felt in a number of other important works in more or less subtle ways as well.[48] Harmless suggests that Augustine would have even memorized some of Cicero's works in their entirety.[49] It should come as no surprise, then, that Augustine's sample orations to those inquiring into the faith bear a number of striking similarities to the standard four-fold judicial speech pattern.[50] In particular,

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[48] On the importance of Cicero, see *Conf.* 3.4.7.

[49] According to Harmless, Augustine would have memorized *De inuentione* at least. Harmless, *Augustine*, 123-24. Indeed, he directly quotes it on a number of occasions throughout his corpus: *lib. arb.* 1.13.27; *mor.* 1.6.9; *serm.* 150.8; *en. Ps.* 83.11; *Doc. chr.* 4.5.7 and 4.25.55; *De Trin.* 14.22.14; and *c. Iul.* 4.3.19. For a complete list of all the parallels, see Harald Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics* (Guteborg: Aera Universitatis Cothoburgensis, 1967) 1:57-59.

[50] See Harmless, *Augustine,* 107-154, and esp. the table on 155. Cf. Etchegaray Cruz, "El *de Catechizandis Rudibus* y la metodologia de la evangelización augustinina," *Augustinus* 15 (1970): 349-368.

his *narratio* is descriptive, focused on the past, and concerned with establishing the *character* of the Church.

From the outset, Augustine makes it clear that he is dealing primarily with past events by placing great emphasis on the historical nature of the events which Scripture records. He structures his entire narrative by dividing the Scriptural revelation into seven successive *dispensationes*. The first dispensation spans from Adam to Noah; the second, from Noah to Abraham; the third continues from Abraham through David; the fourth reaches the Babylonian captivity; the fifth consists of the advent of Christ; and the sixth is the age in which humanity, by way of God's grace, is transformed by the renewing of the mind and reformed after God's own image (just as man was created on the sixth day of creation). The seventh *dispensatio* is the age of the Church's final rest in the presence of God.

To be sure, using historical reconstruction for the sake of education and apologetics can be traced back to Christianity's Jewish roots.[51] Deogratias himself takes for granted that the narrative plays an important role in catechetical instruction, which is why he writes to ask Augustine about it in the first place. His use of an historical framework is, therefore, not itself unique. However, what is unique about Augustine's narrative is that his description of the past is squarely focused on describing the character of the Church. He immediately recommends that the catechist draw out the continuity between the scriptural narrative and the Church by narrating the history of salvation right up to the present time.[52] By making this connection, Arnoldo

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[51] See Harmless, *Augustine*, 127.

[52] R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 22-44. Cf. Boniface Ramsey's comment that "the very use of salvation history as the foundation for catechesis was in itself rather unusual in the early church." Ramsey continues, "It is undoubtedly for this reason [because the addressees were *rudes*] that Augustine uses history as his vehicle, because it is easier to grasp by inquirers than a more strictly dogmatic approach." "*Catechizandis Rudibus, De*" in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Alan Fitzgerald and John Cavadini (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 144.

Momigliano has recognized, Augustine is doing more than simply teaching the basics of Christianity; he is making a case for the Church.[53] Momigliano suggests that Augustine is attempting to demonstrate the antiquity of the Church and thereby impress her respectability on the minds of those in his audience. However, while he is right to point to the connection between Augustine's inclusion of the present life of the Church in his narrative and the strategy of his argument, Momigliano's explanation does not sufficiently account for the subtleties in how Augustine constructs his *narratio.* A careful reading reveals that Augustine is not simply making a case for the Church's respectability or antiquity, even though this is certainly entailed in his claim; rather, he is making a more fundamental and nuanced argument for the Church's *character*. This fits naturally with his use of the judicial framework. After all, we have already observed that the character of one standing trial in a court of law would be of paramount importance for establishing one's case.

Augustine's first and much lengthier example is designed with an inquirer who is city-bred and sincerely seeking the heavenly rest of the life to come in mind.[54] He begins by offering an *exordium*, in which he renders the inquirer attentive and predisposed to his speech by praising the motives with which the inquirer has come. While many inquire into the faith with the hopes of temporal reward, this inquirer has come with proper motives. Thus, Augustine's goal is to turn the inquirer's attention to eternal word of the Lord, so that, "cleaving to that which endures for ever, he may himself together with it endure for ever."[55] Building on the end goal of eternal rest,

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[53] See Arnaldo Momigliano, "Pagan and Christian Historiography," in *The Conflict Between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, ed. Arnoldo Momigliano (The Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1963), 83. Cf. Harmless, *Augustine*, 128.

[54] *Cat. rud.* 16.24.

[55] *Cat. rud.* 16.24 (CCSL 46 149; Canning, 133): *haerens ei quod manet in aeternum, etiam ipse cum illo maneat in aeternum.*

Augustine begins his *narratio* by drawing the inquirer's attention to the story of creation, in which God's rest on the seventh day foreshadows the future rest in which all the saints will rest in God and he will rest in them.[56] It is right, therefore, that this is the goal of the inquirer, since it is the end goal of the divine *narratio* itself.[57]

After this introduction, Augustine embarks on his narrative. He emphasizes three episodes in particular, which reveal his *causa*: creation, the flood, and the exodus and subsequent journey of Israel. Each of these episodes reveals God's salvific work in history that Augustine will link to the Catholic Church in the present age. Augustine uses the creation account to set the context for his argument. He recognizes that in the creation story there are questions surrounding how God could allow sin to enter the world, and so he comments that God's omnipotence and goodness should not be doubted by the fact that there are masses of evil people. There have always been evil people, he points out, just as there have always been those who honour God; therefore, the presence of evil should not be taken to indicate the victory of the devil or as a reason for questioning the character of God.[58] This is an important point to make at the outset of his *narratio* because it sets the context for explicating a key feature of the character of salvation that will continue to crop up throughout his narrative—namely, that salvation comes to those surrounded by evil. To draw out this point, Augustine introduces his doctrine of the two cities here: "So we see two cities—one of the wicked, the other of the saints—existing from the beginning of the human race right through to the end of time. At present they are mixed together

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[56] *Cat. rud.* 17.28.

[57] Augustine instructs that the inquirer should be urged to "enter upon a pathway already prepared in the Holy Scriptures, in which he should not seek after visible miracles, but learn the habit of hoping for things invisible." *Cat. rud.* 6.10 (CCSL 46 134): *nisi iam praeparatum iter in scripturis sanctis, ubi non quaereret uisibilia miracula, sed inuisibilia sperare consuesceret.*

[58] *Cat. rud.* 18.30-19.31.

in body but separated in will."[59] In appearance these two communities are intermingled, but in reality they are distinct. This serves to instruct the audience that it is not on the basis of physical appearances that one should judge his argument for the Church. He will go on to demonstrate that the opposite is, in fact, the case: the appearance of evil's triumph over good is the context in which God's salvific work is found. Therefore, the story of creation and the fall is an important first step in the argument Augustine is mounting.

From here, he launches directly into a discussion of the flood, in which God's salvation is on display in a very clear way. Even though God's judgment is obvious in the fact that he destroyed so many people in the flood, Augustine explains that it is really a story about his mercy.[60] He explains: the building of the ark went on for a hundred years, and during that time God welcomed anyone who wanted to come in, thus "God gives time to repent event to those people who he knows will remain obstinate in their wickedness."[61] Here we see him draw out the second important feature of salvation—namely, its universal scope. The salvation of the ark was open to anyone who would exercise faith and enter it. Those who perished did so only because they refused to enter the ark. Significantly, here we find the first mention of the Church in Augustine's *narratio*. He comments: "In the salvific symbol of the flood (*diluuii sacramento*) from which the just were delivered by the wood, the future Church was also foretold."[62] Just like the ark, the Church is open to any who will enter in faith. Furthermore, just like the ark, there are

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[59] *Cat. rud.* 19.31 (CCSL 46 162; Canning, 112): *duae itaque ciuitates, una iniquorum, altera sanctorum, ab initio generis humani usque in finem saeculi perducuntur, nunc permixtae corporibus, sed uoluntatibus separate.*

[60] *Cat. rud.* 19.32.

[61] *Cat. rud.* 19.32 (CCSL 46 162; Canning, 112): *hoc autem facit deus, etiam illis quos nouit in malitia perseueraturos dans paenitendi spatium*

[62] *Cat. rud.* 19.32 (CCSL 46 162; Canning, 112): *praenuntiabatur tamen etiam diluuii sacramento, quo per lignum iusti liberati sunt, futura ecclesia, quam rex eius et deus christus mysterio suae crucis ab huius saeculi submersione suspendit.*

fewer in the Church than there are outside of it.[63] The salvation found by entering the Church, Augustine is claiming, is figuratively represented in the story of the flood.

Even after the flood, Augustine goes on, evil people continued to be prevalent. Nevertheless, a small group of faithful people continued to persist amid the evils of the world. As a prime example, Augustine turns to Abraham, explaining that Abraham is significant because through him is shown a "sacrament of the son of God" (*sacramentum filii dei*).[64] But what really interests Augustine is the significance Abraham has for the Church, which is why he devotes most of his attention to Abraham's descendants as the prefiguration of the Church body. Once again, Augustine begins by emphasizing that those belonging to the two cities are mixed in outward appearance. There were those with carnal motives as well as some with righteous motives in Israel, just as there are in the Church: "True, it [Israel] did include large numbers of the carnally-minded who worshiped God in order to gain visible benefits; but also numbered in its ranks were the few who kept before their minds the rest that was to come and looked for their homeland in heaven."[65] The difference between these two communities is that those belonging to the one had true faith and those belonging to the other did not. By their faith, those with sincere motives attained salvation. But Augustine is concerned to show that the salvific faith exercised by Israel is the same salvific faith exercised by those in the Church. That is why he is sure to comment that the faith of Israel was faith in Christ, even though they preceded him in time. He

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[63] This last point Augustine makes by emphasizing the fact that sinfulness persisted even after Noah and his family disembarked from the ark: "God was not ignorant of the fact that, even of those who had been saved in the ark, there would be born wicked men, who would cover the face of the earth a second time with iniquities." *Cat. rud.* 19.32 (CCSL 46 163): *neque enim deus ignorabat, quod etiam ex illis qui fuerant in arca seruati, nascituri erant mali, qui faciem terrae iniquitatibus iterum implerent.*

[64] *Cat. rud.* 19.33 (CCSL 46 163).

[65] *Cat. rud.* 19.33 (CCSL 46 163; Canning 113): *erat enim ibi multitudo carnalis, quae propter uisibilia beneficia colebat deum. erant ibi autem pauci futuram requiem cogitantes et caelestem patriam requirentes.*

appeals to the analogy of Jacob's birth to make his point, where he was born holding the heel of

his twin brother, Esau. Just as Jacob's hand preceded his head at birth but was nevertheless

governed by his head, so also Israel, "although they were born before him, [they] were still

integrally connected, under the direction of the head, to the entire body of which he is the

head."[66] The faith and salvation of Israel is, then, the same faith and salvation found in the

Church. Thus, the rites and practices of Israel, too, foreshadow the rites and sacraments of the

Church: "Of these saints who preceded the Lord's birth in time it can be said, not only of their

words but also of their life and their wives and their children and their deeds, that they were a

prophecy of this present time when, through faith in the passion of Christ, the Church is being

gathered together from among the nations."[67] Just as he did with the episode of the flood,

Augustine is here using Israel as a lens through which to expound on the character of the Church.

His discussion of Israel sets the context for his discussion of the exodus, the most obvious

example of God's salvific work in Israel's history. Augustine begins by observing a number of

important parallels between the accounts of the exodus and the flood: in both cases salvation is

attained by passing through water (the flood and the Red Sea) by means of wood (the ark and

Moses' staff). This shows that these two central instances of salvation in Israel's history are two

instances of salvific work wrought by the same God; they are two separate episodes within the

same story. This is important because what really interests Augustine is showing the continuity

between the salvation depicted throughout the Old Testament and that found in the Church. For

this reason, he points out that the important function of wood and water in these two events

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[66] *Cat. rud.* 19.33 (CCSL 46 163; Canning, 113): *quamuis ante nati sunt, tamen uniuerso corpori, cuius ille caput est, sub capite cohaeserunt.*

[67] *Cat. rud.* 19.33 (CCSL 46 163; Canning, 113): *uita et coniugia et filii et facta prophetia fuit huius temporis, quo per fidem passionis christi ex gentibus congregatur ecclesia.*

foreshadow the importance of the cross and baptism for salvation in the Church.[68] He goes on to say that a number of other images in Israel's exodus and subsequent journey to the Promised Land also foreshadow the practices and rites of the church: the blood on the doorposts foreshadow the practice of making the sign of the cross; their earthly reward of land prefigures the spiritual reward of the faithful; the earthly Jerusalem is a sign of the heavenly city, and its king, David, prefigures the rule of Christ over his people.[69] There are so many other church practices that can be found prefigured in Israel that Augustine comments it would be tedious to go through them all, so he advises the inquirer to look into them themselves, which they will be able to do "by degrees" (*paulatim*) as they progress in their understanding of Scripture.[70]

Even Israel's position in the world foreshadows the Church. While she is the locus of God's salvation, she is not the source of salvation; salvation only belongs to God. This is Augustine's point when he turns next to Israel's Babylonian captivity, where they were subjected to the rulers of their age, just as the Church exists in a world with its rulers. Jerusalem, he observes, means "vision of peace" (*uisio pacis*), and Babylon means "confusion" (*confusio*).[71] Israel's subjection to Babylonian rulers "is a symbolic foreshadowing of the time when the Church of Christ in all its holy ones, citizens as they are of the heavenly Jerusalem, was to be politically subject to the kings of this world."[72] No one should judge the Church based on her position in the world because, just as God saw Israel through their subjection to Babylon and

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[68] *Cat. rud.* 20.35.

[69] *Cat. rud.* 20.36.

[70] *Cat. rud.* 20.36 (CCSL 46 164).

[71] *Cat. rud.* 20.36 (CCSL 46 164); 21.37 (CCSL 46 165).

[72] *Cat. rud.* 21.37 (CCSL 46 165; Canning, 115): *figurate significat ecclesiam christi in omnibus sanctis eius, qui sunt ciues ierusalem caelestis, seruituram fuisse sub regibus huius saeculi.*

restored their peace, so also will he see his Church through the disruption of her peace and bring her to her eternal salvation.[73] The story of salvation history becomes the story of the Church.

Augustine goes on to explain that his *narratio* to this point sums up the first five ages of salvation history, with the sixth age being the present and the seventh age to come in the future, eternal rest, which is prefigured in the seventh day of creation. It is during this age that the important latent themes running through the history of God's salvific work are made explicit. In particular, it is the time when God's grace is made available to all nations to renew and reform the whole of humankind, just as man was originally formed in God's image on the sixth day of creation.[74] It is also during this time, Augustine explains, that the hope of Israel is revealed as a spiritual, not material, reality.[75] The differences in the sixth age from the previous five—the revelation of the catholicity and immateriality of salvation—causes many to fail to recognize the continuity of the present age with the previous five. Rather than embracing this sixth age, people have tried to suppress it by crucifying Christ and persecuting his followers.[76] Nevertheless, the Church attests to her own legitimacy in the fact that, like a sprouting vine, she could not be thwarted and instead grew all over the world, thus fulfilling everything prophesied about this age in the previous five.[77]

Augustine concludes his *narratio* by explaining that it is by holding steadfast to this spiritual reality, by staying true to her character, that the Church reaches her goal of eternal rest. The clear implication is that the inquirer, who came with the desire for eternal rest, must enter

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[73] *Cat. rud.* 21.37-38.

[74] *Cat. rud.* 22.39.

[75] *Cat. rud.* 22.40-23.41.

[76] *Cat. rud.* 23.42-43.

[77] *Cat. rud.* 24.44-45.

the Church, to whom that rest properly belongs. Therefore, addressing his audience as judge, Augustine asks them to consider the evidence he has just presented and urges them to call upon God for salvation.[78]

Augustine's *narratio* is carefully constructed around his central *causa*. He has chosen key episodes from the Old Testament to draw out the central feature of the Church—namely, its salvific character. Creation, the flood, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the entrance to the Promised Land all mark the high points of salvation history that Augustine strings together into a narrative about the character of salvation. In each instance, he draws out the *similitudo* between the account in the Old Testament and the life of the Church in the present age. The implication, though never explicitly stated, is that the Catholic Church is the subject of the divine *narratio* and thus the true locus of salvation in the present age. He is resolving the question of whether the Catholic Church is the true Church by demonstrating that she possesses the characteristics that *define* the true Church.

An Unfinished Argument

Nevertheless, while Augustine's *narratio* clearly has close affinities with the judicial pattern, he does not adopt that pattern as neatly as one might like. Cicero, we have noted, outlines four indispensable parts of a judicial speech, but Augustine's catechetical oration only contains three parts—an *exordium*, *narratio*, and *peroratio*—with no discernable *confirmatio*. This is rather strange, especially given that Augustine seems to follow the pattern in every other respect. Augustine would have been well aware that omitting such a key component significantly weakens his case. What explanation is there, then, for why he makes this significant alteration?

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[78] *Cat. rud.* 25.47-48.

The first and most natural explanation that must be considered is that Augustine modifies the textbook speech pattern to suit his own purposes. After all, the mature Cicero himself held that rigid conformity to rhetorical patterns was not the best practice. Furthermore, the proof of one's case, he contends throughout *De oratore*, is not simply a matter of logical arguments; it is, rather, a matter of rousing the audience to the orator's desired end. Is it possible that Augustine was simply following Cicero's lead here, including the necessary proofs within his *narratio* instead of providing a separate *confirmatio*? Indeed, this is the case Harmless makes. He argues that, even though Augustine does not provide a distinct *confirmatio*, he includes enough elements of the *confirmatio* within the *narratio* to show it to be present in a mutated form. He points out that when Deogratias specifically requests advice on constructing the *narratio*, both men would have recognized that these questions were "about the structure of a set speech" and that they "concerned only a single part of a much larger oration."[79] Therefore, when he finds Augustine emphasizing fulfilled prophecies and responding to those who reject the resurrection of the dead within this *narratio*, Harmless concludes that Augustine is going beyond Deogratias's request, touching "not only on the narrative but on other parts [of the speech] as well."[80] This Harmless takes as evidence that Augustine conflates the *confirmatio* with the *narratio*. Therefore, he claims that all the elements which make a judicial speech pattern an effective structure for an argument are present in Augustine's sample orations, despite his use of a tripartite structure.[81]

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[79] Harmless, *Augustine,* 125-26.

[80] Harmless, *Augustine,* 155, 126.

[81] Even in Harmless's reconstruction of *cat. rud.* as being based on the pattern of a classical judicial oration he has to admit that Augustine conflates the categories to such an extent that there are really only three sections to the speech—the *exordium*, the *narratio*, and the *peroratio*—in which the *narratio* constitutes the whole of the main body of the speech. See Harmless, *Augustine*, 155. Sean Innerst, on the other hand, has suggested that, because proof by example is normally more conducive for deliberative than forensic oratory, this work should be seen as

However, if we take a closer look at Augustine's speech, it becomes clear that he himself does not consider the proofs of his case to be woven into the *narratio*, as Harmless claims. There are two main factors which call into question Harmless's straightforward reading. First, if Augustine and Deogratias are working with a set speech in mind which contains at least four principal parts, and if Augustine does not limit himself to advice on the *narratio* but offers advice on the other parts as well, it is all the more puzzling that he does not at least make mention of a *confirmatio* or treat it even briefly as a distinct part of the speech. Both men would have known that *narratio* constitutes only one half of the main body of a judicial speech and that the *confirmatio* constitutes the other half. Yet Augustine makes no mention of it. Second, even though Deogratias's questions surrounded the technical aspects of constructing a *narratio*— where to begin and end—Augustine shows very little interest in those technical questions. He is far more interested in discussing the goal of *narratio* instead. If Deogratias had a set speech pattern in mind, the question of where to end his *narratio* would have also been a question about where to begin his *confirmatio*. But Augustine makes no effort to correct this assumption, as he most certainly would have done if he had intended to conflate the *confirmatio* with the *narratio*. These factors suggest that, regardless of what Degratias had in mind when he asked for advice, Augustine's did not consider his speech to contain a *confirmatio*.

In fact, Augustine outlines quite carefully which elements a *narratio* in this speech should include and which elements it should exclude. This is important not only because it further demonstrates that Augustine does not consider his speech to contain the elements of a *confirmatio*, but also because it reveals that Augustine is consciously working with a specific

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conforming most properly to the deliberative genre, as an appeal to a hearer to "judge a proposed future course of action, in this case, entry into the Church's catechumenate." Sean Innerst, "Divine Pedagogy and Covenant Memorial: The Catechetical *Narratio* and the New Evangelization" *Letter and Spirit* 8 (2013), 168.

sense of *narratio* in mind. Augustine makes three distinct comments regarding what a *narratio* in

this kind of speech should include. First, in response to Deogratias's question whether or not he

should include an *expositio* along with his *narratio*, Augustine advises that no separate *expositio*

is needed, saying that "the proper course of our narration" (*narrationis tractu*) should itself

contain elements of exposition: "We should rather let the very truth of the explanation that we

provide be like the golden thread which holds together the precious stones in an ornament but

does not spoil the ornament's lines by making itself too obvious."[82] The *narratio*, he is saying,

contains in itself an exposition that is subtly wound into its fabric. Second, he claims that the

exhortatio should also be set forth as a part of the *narratio*, explaining that, once one has

narrated the history of salvation from creation to the present age, "we should deeply impress

upon our hearer the hope in the resurrection," in which "the punishments of those who oppose

God" are to be "recalled with loathing and dread," and "the kingdom of the just and faithful

ones" should also be celebrated "with ardent longing" (*cum desiderio*).[83] Narrating these future

events was intended to rouse the audience to action; therefore, the *narratio* should also contain

an element of exhortation. Third, he clearly states that a *refutatio* does not belong within the

narratio, for when constructing this kind of *narratio*, one must remember: "It is not that we have

to argue against each and every type of misguided person, nor do we have to refute all of their

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[82] *Cat. rud.* 6.10. (CCSL 46 133; Canning, 75): *sed ipsa ueritas adhibita rationis quasi aurum sit gemmarum ordinem ligans, non tamen ornamenti seriem ulla immoderatione perturbans.*

[83] *Cat. rud.* 7.11 (CCSL 46 133; Canning, 75): *commemoratis que cum detestatione et horrore poenis impiorum, regnum iustorum atque fidelium et superna illa ciuitas eius que gaudium cum desiderio praedicandum est.* To be sure, Cicero instructs that the *narratio* ought to outline past and present events, but that one's argument should also include a persuasive account of the future (*suasio*) that will serve as an exhortation. However, as we noted in the dialectical quality of *narratio* most evident in Quintilian, even this *exhortatio* should be considered within the scope of *narratio*. Thus, even an account of future events, designed to persuade the audience, took the form of *narratio*. Harmless, *Augustine*, 131, and Cruz, "El *de Catechizandis*," 366, both note this parallel.

distorted beliefs."[84] Cicero had gone to notable lengths to justify the conflation of the *refutatio*

with the *confirmatio* alone. Here, following Cicero's practice, Augustine says that the *narratio* is

not the proper place to insert one's *refutatio*. Therefore, while he does address those who object

to the resurrection of the dead within his *narratio*, this can hardly be counted as a *refutatio*, since

he follows Cicero in holding that a *refutatio* should not be included in the *narratio*. Based on

these factors, we can see that Augustine was not, in his own estimation, touching on all the

"other parts" of speech. Rather, he was making use of the expanded qualities of *narratio* in order

to convey his distinct *causa*.[85]

　　Both Augustine's explicit statement at the beginning of the work and the way he

constructs the *narratio* of salvation history within the work show that he sees the catechist's task

to be that of persuasion. This, too, is Cicero's recommended goal. Yet, in this first address to

inquirers, he never gets around to stating his case explicitly or to justifying his account.

Furthermore, he goes to lengths to define the kind of *narratio* that should be included in this

speech. It is a *narratio* that possesses many of the features belonging to its role in a judicial

speech pattern; but he is clear that it does not include the key elements of a *confirmatio*. His

speech, in this respect, remains unfinished.

Conclusion

Having closely reviewed *De catechizandis rudibus*, we can now see how Augustine's

introduction to the rudiments of the Christian faith takes the form of a *narratio* intended to

persuade the audience of his case. This, most naturally, conforms to the way a *narratio* was

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[84] *Cat. rud.* 7.11. (CCSL 46 133; Canning, 76): *non ut contra singula peruersorum genera disputetur omnes que illorum prauae opiniones propositis quaestionibus refellantur.*

[85] *Cat. rud.* 6.10.

constructed in a judicial oration. Augustine uses Scripture to construct a *narratio* that is primarily descriptive in nature; he deals with Scripture as a record of past events, strings them together in service of his intended aim, and addresses his audience as judge. I have also noted that the presence of this strategy is further reinforced in how Augustine explains the role of the catechist. His *causa*, I have claimed, is centred around persuading his audience that the Catholic Church is the locus of salvation by making an argument for the Church's character. However, both he and Deogratias, as well as their potential audiences, would have known that this argument is incomplete. Based on the structure of a judicial oration—the most suitable structure for Augustine's purpose—there appears to be a glaring omission in Augustine's argument: there is nothing that can be classified as a proof, or *confirmatio*, anywhere in the work. Augustine provides a *narratio*, in which he outlines his particular reading of salvation history, but he does not offer any arguments that substantiate his reading. He offers a vision of the Church's character but does not mount any proofs of that vision. In fact, he seems to explicitly exclude such proofs from his oration. Given the coherence between the three progressive stages of the catechumenate, I suggest that looking to the other point at which Augustine directly addresses the catechumens—his sermons to the *competentes*—is the best place to look in order to shed light on Augustine's strategy.

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The Sermons to the *Competentes*

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The *narratio* of Scripture the catechumens heard at their initial inquiry into the faith would remain the dominant framework for their understanding of Christianity right up until their preparation for baptism during Lent. To be sure, they would attend Church and listen to Augustine's sermons in between these two points, but, aside from a few off hand references,

Augustine rarely addresses them directly in his sermons to the faithful. It was only once they

became *competentes* that we know for certain he returned to address them directly. We have ten

sermons that we know Augustine preached directly to those preparing for baptism, nine of which

will prove to be significant for reconstructing his strategy.[86] Five of these sermons he preached

on the Creed, and the other four he preached on the Lord's Prayer. In these sermons Augustine

continues the argument for the Church he had begun in *De catechizandis rudibus.* But his tone is

noticeably different: rather than weaving his argument subtly into a *narratio*, his case is made

explicit. His apology for the Catholic Church is unmasked, as is the invective levelled against her

detractors. In these sermons, I contend, we find the principal elements that belong to the

confirmatio in the rhetorical structure of his argument. His case for the Church, then, is only

complete when *De catechizandis rudibus* and his sermons to the *comptetentes* are considered

together.

Of the nine sermons to the *competentes* that have come down to us, four were given at the

handing over of the Apostle's Creed, one at the handing back of the Creed, and four more were

given at the handing over of the Lord's Prayer. Augustine frames his exposition of both the

Creed and the Lord's Prayer each time by quoting Romans 10:13-14 at the outset, which reads:

"For 'every one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved'. But how are men to call

upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they

have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher?" (RSV).[87] Augustine skillfully

marshalls this passage in support of his overarching argument. It is the witness to his case,

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[86] The ninth sermon, *serm.* 216, was preached at the beginning of Lent. It is usually dated quite early in Augustine's episcopal career (391), and, as Hill remarks, could possibly be the first sermon Augustine ever preached. See Hill, 6:168, n.1. Because of its decidedly early date, I will not treat it in any detail here in this chapter. There are, in addition, a number of sermons where Augustine briefly addresses the *competentes*. I will make use of these sermons as supplements to the nine sermons delivered entirely to the *competentes*.

[87] *Serm.* 56.1; *serm.* 57.1; *serm.* 58.1; *serm.* 59.1; *serm.* 212.1; *serm.* 213.1; *serm.* 214.1; *serm.* 215.1.

serving as the logic by which he both validates his *narratio* and refutes his opponents. Verse 13, Augustine says, teaches that salvation is universal, freely available to all who call on the Lord. Verse 14, he goes on, teaches that those who are faithful to carrying out this universal mission do so by instilling proper belief before they teach people how to call on the Lord. In these two verses Augustine finds a definition of salvation that directly accords with both the definition underlying his *narratio* and the character of the Catholic Church.

The Creed: Serms. *212, 213, 214, 215, 398*

In the five extant sermons which he preached on the Creed, Augustine teaches that the Creed, or *symbolum*, contains in brief "everything that is believed for the sake of eternal salvation."[88] He tells the *competentes* that the contents of the Creed has already been imparted to them as catechumens through their acquaintance with Scripture through the Church,[89] but the Creed presents these things in a "tightly knit" (*constricta*) order.[90] It is, he says, "a briefly compiled rule of faith, intended to instruct the mind without overburdening the memory; to be said in a few words, from which much is to be gained."[91] In other words, the Creed is a short exposition of the

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[88] *Serm.* 212.1 (PL 38 1058; Hill, 6:130): *quo continetur breviter, propter aeternam salutem, omne quod creditis.* Augustine explains that the word *symbolum* is derived from its use in commercial settings by merchants to guarantee their loyalty to the given terms of their association. Therefore, in *serm.* 212.1 he says the Creed is the mark of those concerned with "spiritual merchandise." Furthermore, he says in *serm.* 213.2 that it is "something by which Christians can recognize each other," and in *serm.* 214.12 that "in it is contained the prescribed faith and pledge of our association, and it is by confessing it, as by giving a password, that the faithful Christian can be recognized." As a pledge it fulfils God's promise in the Old Testament to write his laws on human hearts and not on tablets of stone (Jer. 31:33). For this reason, *competentes* are to memorize the creed and not write it down (*serm.* 212.2). He also states in *serm.* 214.2 that it is important to memorize it to be able to defend the faith against those who have been "taken prisoner by the devil." Elsewhere, he comments that the words of the Creed are "scattered throughout the divine scriptures, but they have been gathered from there and reduced to one short form" (*serm.* 445).

[89] *Serm.* 212.2 (PL 38 1058): *hoc est ergo symbolum, quod uobis per scripturas et sermones ecclesiasticos insinuatum est.*

[90] *Serm.* 214.1 (PL 38 1065).

[91] *Serm.* 213.1 (PL 38 1059; Hill, 134): *Symbolum est breviter complexa regula fidei, ut mentem instruat, nec oneret memoriam; paucis verbis dicitur, unde multum acquiratur.*

entirety of Scripture; it contains in propositional form what Scripture teaches in narrative form. In the sermons on the handing over of the Creed, Augustine offers a line-by-line commentary on the Creed itself. His exposition reveals an interesting connection to the *narratio* of Scripture that his audience would have known from their initial inquiry into the faith. Augustine's exposition of the Creed is consistently driven by his interpretation of the first line, "I believe in God the Father, almighty…." Augustine cautions his audience that being almighty does not mean he can do anything. God can never be untrue to himself. He can never lie, for example. What the Creed means when it professes God to be almighty, Augustine explains, is that God's will (*uoluntas*) can never be thwarted.[92] This is the purpose of the Creed, he teaches: to make explicit the *uoluntas* of God that is woven throughout the *narratio* of Scripture. He therefore goes on to expound on the Creed as a record of God's action that he undertook of his own will (*uoluntas*). One of the points I argued for in the previous chapter is that Augustine's reliance on *narratio* results in his emphasis on the *uoluntas* of the divine author. It is, therefore, significant that here we find him explicating the Creed—the statement that succinctly sums up Scripture's *narratio*— by explaining what the divine *uoluntas* is.

With the importance of God's *uoluntas* in mind, Augustine focuses his exposition of the Creed on Christ, the very thing he told Deogratias was the *causa* of Scripture's *narratio*. God's will (*uoluntas*), Augustine asserts, was to beget the one and only Word, through whom all things were made. Furthermore, he willed to send his only Son, equal in every way to the Father, to be

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[92] *Serm.* 214.3-4. This sermon was likely originally preached in 391, though there are some indications that it was edited later. The early date is based on Augustine's own comment right at the beginning that he is "only a new recruit in the office." However, Verbraken has dated this sermon nearly 20 years later. Hill observes that there is good reason for this, since Augustine's Christology appears to be far more developed than in the other sermons he preached on the Creed. To reconcile these two factors, Hill proposes that Augustine dictated this sermon and then, perhaps, revisited and edited it sometime after 412. See Hill, 6:151-52, n.1

born of a virgin, to suffer and die, and to rise again.[93] He comments that when we profess that

God the Father is 'almighty', this entails any and every ascription of perfection found in

Scripture and should not be taken to imply that the Son is excluded from this profession.[94]

Relying on Jn. 10:30, Phil. 2:6, Jn. 1:1-3, 1 Cor. 1:24, and Wis. 7:27, Augustine demonstrates

that Scripture teaches the equality of Father and Son. Thus, when the Creed professes further on

belief in the incarnate Son, one must not lose sight of his divinity (Phil. 2:7; Isa. 53:1). This is

the central component of the salvation story: salvation appeared to humanity through Jesus

Christ, fully God and fully man.[95]

Establishing all this is important for Augustine's underlying argument. Returning to

Romans 10, he observes that salvation comes by calling on the Lord. But, he notes, this passage

also teaches that one must know something about God before one can call on him. Thus,

teaching the *competentes* something about who God is by way of the Creed serves as a precursor

to the claim he will go on to make—namely, that the Catholic Church is uniquely faithful to the

Pauline logic of salvation—as well as his refutation of his Donatist opponents. Based on the

Pauline logic, he draws out two central characteristics of the Catholic Church. First, he shows

that she is faithful to Rom. 10:13 because she has a universal character:

> The holy Church is what we are; but I don't mean 'we' in the sense of just those of us
> who are here, you that are listening to me now; as many of us as are here by the grace of
> God Christian believers in this Church, that is in this city, as many as there are in this
> region, as many as there are in this province, as many as there are also across the sea, as
> many as there are in the whole wide world. . . . Such is the Catholic Church, our true
> mother, the true consort of that bridegroom.[96]

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[93] *Serm.* 214.3-4.

[94] *Serm.* 212.1.

[95] *Serm.* 212.1.

[96] *Serm.* 213.8 (PL 38 1060; Hill, 6:138): *Sancta Ecclesia nos sumus: sed non sic dixi, Nos, quasi ecce qui hic sumus, qui me modo audistis. Quotquot hic sumus, Deo propitio, Christiani fideles in hac ecclesia, id est, in ista*

Asserting that the true Church is stretched out through time and across geographic regions carries

clear anti-Donatist resonances. Augustine's claim of catholicity, then, is twofold: first, based on

Rom. 10:13, he claims that catholicity is the mark of the true locus of salvation; and second,

based on the Catholic Church's commitment to teach anyone in any place how to properly call

on the name of the Lord and be saved, he claims that she fits the profile Paul outlines.

Catholicity, then, is a definitive mark of the "true consort" of Christ.

The second characteristic of the Church Augustine is most interested in discussing is her

purity. Contrary to the Donatists who held that the purity of the church's members reflected on

the purity of the church, Augustine is adamant that the Church's purity is derived solely from her

union with Christ. If this were not the case, she would not be a pure bride but a whore. Indeed,

she once was a whore before she was redeemed by Christ. He states: "She mustn't deny that she

was once a whore. . . . How can she not have been a whore, when she used to go fornicating after

idols and demons?"[97] Through Christ, however, she has been made a virgin. In imitation of

Mary, she is now both virgin and mother.

In making these specific points, we find the presence of a *refutatio* embedded within

Augustine's argument.[98] In opposition to the Donatists, Augustine argues that the true Church—

the one that is faithful to Scripture's characterization of salvation—is the Catholic Church. That

is why he instructs the catechumens in *Sermo de symbolo ad catechumenos* to cling to

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civitate, quotquot sunt in ista regione, quotquot sunt in ista provincia, quotquot sunt et trans mare, quotquot sunt et in toto orbe terrarium. . . . Sic se habet Ecclesia catholica mater nostra vera, vera illius sponsi conjux.

[97] *Serm.* 213.8 (PL 38 1060; Hill, 6:138-39): *Quia meretrix fuit, non debet negare. . . . Quomodo non erat meretrix, quando post idola et daemonia fornicabatur?*

[98] Since both Augustine and Cicero hold that the *refutatio* belongs within the *confirmatio*, and not the *narratio*, it is especially significant that there is a clear refutation of opposing positions woven throughout these sermons. *Cat. rud.* 7.11; *part. or.* 1; *orat.* 2.76.

"the holy Church, the one Church, the true Church, the catholic Church, fighting against

all heresies: fight, it can: be fought down, it cannot. As for heresies, they went all out of it, like

as unprofitable branches pruned from the vine: but itself abides in its root, in its Vine, in

its charity."[99] It is only in the life of this true Church, he goes on, that sins are remitted—through

baptism, through prayer, and through penance.[100] In *serm.* 215 he goes further, instructing his

audience to reject anything that is not Catholic:

> So shun as best you can the many and various deceivers, the multitude of whose sects and
> names it would take far too long to explain now. . . . One thing only I urge you to take to
> heart, and that is by every means possible to turn your minds and your ears away from the
> person who is not a Catholic, so that you may be able to lay hold of the forgiveness of
> sins and the resurrection of the flesh and life everlasting through the one, true, and holy
> Catholic Church, in which we learn of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, one
> God, to whom is honor and glory for ever and ever.[101]

In contrast to the Donatists, or any other sect, it is only in the Catholic Church, Augustine says,

that "the soul which had been dead in its sins comes to life again" (*reuiuiscet anima*).[102] In other

words, it is only in her that salvation is found. Understanding the *uoluntas* of Scripture,

therefore, amounts to coming to see the Catholic Church as the "mother" of our salvation, whose

faith "is solidly based on the firm foundation which is Christ the Lord."[103] The claim that only

she properly teaches the faith contained in Scripture and summarized in the Creed establishes

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[99] *Symb. cat.* 14 (= *serm.* 398.14) (CCSL 46 194; Hill, 10:454): *ipsa est ecclesia sancta, ecclesia una, ecclesia uera, ecclesia catholica, contra omnes haereses pugnans: pugnare potest, expugnari tamen non potest. haereses omnes de illa exierunt, tamquam sarmenta inutilia de uite praecisa, ipsa autem manet in radice sua, in uite sua, in caritate sua.*

[100] *Symb. cat.* 16 (= *serm.* 398.16).

[101] *Serm.* 215.9 (PL 38 1065; Hill, 6:158-59): *Fugite ergo, quantum potestis, diversos et varios deceptores, quorum sectas et nomina prae multitudine sui, nunc longum est enarrare. . . . Unum vestris precibus commendo, ut ab eo qui catholicus non est, animum et auditum vestrum omnimodis avertatis: quo remissionem peccatorum et resurrectionem carnis et vitam aeternam, per unam veram et sanctam Ecclesiam catholicam apprehendere valeatis; in qua discitur Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus unus Deus; cui est honor et gloria in saecula saeculorum.*

[102] *Serm.* 214.11 (PL 38 1072; Hill, 6:151).

[103] *Serm.* 215.1 (Hill, 6:154). For the likelihood of a late date, probably around 425, see Hill, 6:159, n. 1.

that she follows the first half of the Pauline logic and serves as the first part of Augustine's argument.

<center>*The Lord's Prayer:* Serms. *56, 57, 58, 59*</center>

The four sermons we have on the Lord's Prayer all deal with it as it is recorded in Matt. 6:7-13. They are very similar and were likely preached on four different years, though the content reveals nothing regarding the order in which they were preached. All of them likely date to the end of the first decade or beginning of the second decade of the fifth century. In these sermons, as in the sermons on the Creed, Augustine is teaching the catechumens the aspects of the Christian faith that they would have been excluded from up to this point.

Augustine holds together these sermons with the sermons he preached on the Creed through his reference to Romans 10:13-14.[104] In *serm.*56, Augustine observes that, according to this Pauline passage, faith must be logically prior to calling on the Lord, for "how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed?" (RSV). Again, Augustine points out that the Catholic Church follows Paul here, which is why the *competentes* are taught about their faith through the Creed before they are taught how to call on the Lord through the Lord's Prayer. As the Pauline passage indicates, prayer must always be an act of faith. But this, too, Augustine observes, is present throughout the divine *narratio.* Even in the psalms where the psalmist appears to pray for the destruction of his enemy—a prayer seemingly based on selfish desires and not on faith—these are, in fact, prophetic utterances based entirely on faith.[105] The Catholic teaching on prayer, he is arguing, is faithful to the character of the Church outlined in the

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[104] See *serm.* 56.1; *serm.* 57.1; *serm.* 58.1; *serm.* 59.1.

[105] *Serm.* 56.3.

narratio he previously provided. The point he is making, once again, is that the Catholic Church fits the character profile for the locus of salvation established throughout Scripture.

This, then, is the context for his line-by-line exposition of the Lord's Prayer, which immediately follows. In his exposition, two related emphases come to the fore: the importance of faith and the otherworldliness of the Christian's goal. Augustine introduces both of these themes by reflecting on the first line of the prayer, "Our Father who art in heaven…." From this line, he says, we can adduce two things. First, by identifying God as our father, we can adduce that we are included in Christ by faith. However, this inclusion, Augustine goes on, can only come through membership in the Church. To emphasize this point in *serm.*57, he repeats Cyprian's maxim that no one can have God as father who does not also have the Church as mother.[106] Second, if God is our father, we have then become co-heirs with Christ. But our inheritance, Augustine cautions, is not of this world; it is otherworldly. Thus the object of Christian faith is not focused on this world.[107] It is, rather, based on whose children we have come to be and what it means to have God for our father that Augustine initiates his commentary on the substance of the prayer itself.[108] Continuing to be guided by the Romans 10 passage, Augustine insists that it is important to learn to call on the Lord with the proper faith; it is one thing to call on the Lord, but to call on the Lord and be saved, we must "cry out to God" (*clamamus ad Deum*) in faith, "in order to come to the place where we can never die" (*ut ueniamus ubi nunquam moriamur*).[109]

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[106] *Serm.* 57.2. There is an anti-Donatist polemical edge detected even in this citation, as Cyprian was an African authority for both Catholics and Donatists.

[107] *Serm.* 59.1. Again, this comment was likely directed against the Donatists. One of the points Augustine will continually bring up against the Donatists in other contexts is that holiness is not something attainable in this life.

[108] *Serm.* 57.2.

[109] *Serm.* 57.3 (PL 38 387; Hill, 3:110). Cf. *serm.* 58.1-2.

The petitions in the Lord's Prayer, Augustine goes on, all serve this end purpose of calling on the Lord for salvation. Pronouncing God's name as hallowed cannot be understood as wishing God well, since he is holy and nothing bad can ever happen to him; but, he says, "we are wishing ourselves well, that his name be hallowed; may what is always holy be hallowed in us."[110] Similarly, when we profess "thy kingdom come," we expresses our desire not that he will reign, for he surely does reign and will continue to reign for ever; rather, we expresses our desire that it will come to us, that we will be numbered among the elect.[111] Again, when we say, "Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" we must recognize that God's will cannot ever be thwarted; these words express our desire to participate in his will, just as the angels in heaven and the patriarchs on earth, just as our spirit is renewed by believing so might our flesh be renewed by rising, just as our mind perceives the truth of heaven so might our lives reflect it.[112] Next comes the petition for temporal provisions, in the words, "Give us this day our daily bread." This petition, Augustine observes, speaks of the support we need—the bodily sustenance—while we are on our journey to our eternal home. But, he notes, this can also be understood in a different sense, as a petition for spiritual sustenance on our journey through the daily bread of Scripture, again something we will not need after this life.[113] Finally, when we pray, "forgive us our debts," we are speaking of something that is temporal, for after this life we will not incur debts because there will be no sin. But this petition is made with the goal of future

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[110] *Serm.* 57.4 (PL 38 389; Hill, 3:110): *optamus nobis bonum, ut sanctificetur sanctum nomen ejus: quod semper sanctum est, sanctificetur in nobis.* Cf. *serm.* 59.3.

[111] *Serm.* 57.5.

[112] *Serm.* 57.6.

[113] *Serm.* 57.7.

salvation in mind.[114] And when we pray, "Lead us not into temptation," we recognize this to be a plea for God's help during the daily battles we wage with sin, both internally and externally. This is, again, with the goal of eternal life in mind.[115]

He concludes by summing up his argument: calling upon the Lord for salvation is a matter of exercising our faith in our future salvation. Regardless of what trials or hardships one faces along the journey, Augustine admonishes his audience to remember that their hope is not in this life. This, he says, is what it means to call on the Lord in faith and to find salvation. This, however, is only the case for those who are taught properly how to call on the Lord—something only made possible by the Church's faithfulness to Rom. 10:13-14. By teaching the *competentes* the Creed and Lord's Prayer in that order, the Catholic Church proves that she is faithful to Scripture, and that she alone fulfils Paul's injunction to teach the whole earth how to call upon the Lord.[116] Thus, the Catholic Church alone displays true catholicity. Both the proof and the refutation are, therefore, central in these sermons to further Augustine's claim that the Catholic Church contains the reality of salvation in the manner foretold by the prophets in the Old Testament.[117] Having been established in the sixth age of salvation history, catholicity is at the very heart of the true Church's identity. He states: "Previously, you see, it was only among the Israelites that the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth, had been called upon. . . . But when the fullness of time had come, what had been foretold was fulfilled."[118] The Catholic

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[114] *Serm.* 57.8.

[115] *Serm.* 57.9-12.

[116] See *ench.* 30.114, where Augustine says that faith corresponds to the creed and hope to the Lord's Prayer.

[117] *Serm.* 56.1.

[118] *Serm.* 56.1 (PL 38 377; Hill, 3:95): *antea enim apud solos israelitas invocabatur nomen domini, qui fecit caelum et terram. . . . at ubi venit plenitudo temporis, impletur quod praedictum est, et erit: omnis qui invocauerit nomen domini, salvus erit.*

Church, by being faithful to Paul's evangelical injunction in Romans 10, proves that she bears

the character of catholicity proper to the locus of salvation in the sixth age. In this way,

Augustine mounts a convincing argument for reading the Catholic Church as the true subject of

the divine *narratio* which he presented in *De catechizandis rudibus*.

Conclusion

Augustine's sermons to the *competentes* on the Creed and on the Lord's Prayer provide the

proofs for the argument he makes in his *narratio* to the *rudes*. The Catholic Church, he claims, is

the locus of salvation proper to the sixth age of the divine *narratio*. She alone, therefore, is

continuous with Israel and fulfils that which was foreshadowed in the Old Testament. She proves

her character through her faithfulness to Scripture, demonstrated by her adherence to the pattern

laid out in Romans 10:13-14 that faith precedes one calling on the Lord for salvation. One of the

hallmarks of the Church is her catholicity. The Catholic Church proves her character, therefore,

by teaching all who are genuine how to call on the Lord and find salvation. Catholicity, then, is

one of the principal elements Augustine relies on in this Pauline passage and also one of the

distinguishing marks between the Catholic Church and her Donatist opponents who limit the

church to a specific geographical locale. Furthermore, the Catholic Church's holiness can only

be by the grace of God through Christ, something that distinguishes the Catholic Church once

again from the Donatists. These sermons, therefore, contain both substantial proofs for the

argument Augustine is making and targeted refutations of his opponents, both consistent with the

narratio found in *De catechizandis rudibus*. There are two steps involved in the case Augustine

is making: first, he establishes that salvation is the thread binding together the various ages of

God's work in time and that this reveals certain central features of God's salvific work; and

second, he shows that the Catholic Church of the present age bears the same salvific character that has been observed throughout salvation history and, therefore, is herself the subject of the narrative of that history. The first step is the task appropriate to the *narratio*; the second step belongs most properly to the *confirmatio*. In order to make his case, Augustine demonstrates that in the Catholic Church's faithfulness to Romans 10:13-14 she uniquely bears the salvific reality proper to her place in the divine *narratio*. For these reasons, even though Augustine does not explicitly use the word *confirmatio* in any of these sermons, they are, nevertheless, functionally the *confirmatio* in his extended argument intended to persuade the catechumens of the character of the Catholic Church.

The Catechist

In order to fully appreciate how Augustine's argument is based on his understanding of what he sees as the character of Scripture, it is important to say a few words about the place of the catechist within Augustine's strategy. The role that Augustine assigns to the catechist bears striking resemblance to the role he gives to the preacher. Just as the preacher is to mediate Scripture to the faithful, the catechist is to mediate Scripture to the inquirer. However, how they are to fulfil their roles is different because they are addressing audiences at two different stages of their spiritual progression. Both use the eloquence of Scripture as their model, but they draw on different levels of the biblical *narratio*. The catechist is to mediate the most basic level at this stage of the inquirer's journey.[119] This is why Augustine specifically instructs Deogratias to refrain from commenting on obscure passages or from going into too much detail on minor points when communicating to catechumens. Augustine states that constructing the narrative at

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[119] See *Conf.* 3.5.9.

its most basic level requires that one provide a simple account of the central events recorded in Scripture: "Our account should focus on explaining the deeper meaning of the matters and events that we describe," including the causes and reasons connecting the events. "All the same," he goes on, "we should not allow the introduction of these other dimensions of meaning to make us lose track of the exposition and cause our heart and our tongue to rush off into the intricacies of an over-complicated discussion.[120] This description of a catechist's *narratio*, which resembles Cicero's description of a judicial *narratio*, is intended to be a clear and concise account of salvation history.

Augustine is sure to insist that, by doing this, the orator is not constructing a narrative of his own creation. Rather, the simple narrative he recommends is the narrative contained within Scripture itself. Augustine does not advise Deogratias to invent or embellish any portion of the *narratio* in order to persuade. In fact, as Ernst Fortin has observed, Augustine does not reference the notion of plausibility (*probabilitas* or *credibiliter*) once in *De catechizandis rudibus*, which was a very important part of *narratio* in the rhetorical tradition.[121] The catechist is not crafting a *narratio* as much as he is simply conveying the *narratio* already crafted by the divine author. To be sure, there are many levels to Scripture's *narratio*, but Augustine is set on recommending the most basic level as that which the catechist is to mediate to inquiring minds.[122]

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[120] *Cat. rud.* 6.10 (CCSL 46 133; Canning, 75): *ita ut singularum rerum atque gestorum quae narramus causae rationes que reddantur . . . . non tamen sic asseramus has causas, ut relicto narrationis tractu cor nostrum et lingua in nodos difficilioris disputationis excurrat, sed ipsa ueritas adhibita rationis quasi aurum sit gemmarum ordinem ligans, non tamen ornamenti seriem ulla immoderatione perturbans.*

[121] Ernst Fortin, "Augustine and the Problem of Christian Rhetoric," *AugStud* 5 (1974): 85-100; 92. Daniel Doyle makes the same point in "The Bishop as Teacher," in *Augustine and Liberal Education*, Kim Paffenroth and Kevin H. Hughes eds. (Idaho Falls: Lexington Books, 2008), 81.

[122] *Cat. rud.* 8.12-9.13.

Understandably, this most basic level is not satisfying for the catechist himself, who has advanced beyond such a rudimentary understanding of things. This is why Augustine spends significant time discussing the question of how one goes about communicating Scripture's *narratio* in this sense:

> [T]he difficult part of our task is not in giving rules about where to begin and where to end the historical exposition in which the content of faith is communicated (*narranda*); or about how the historical exposition (*narratio*) should be adapted to circumstances, so as to be shorter at one time, longer at another, yet at all times perfectly complete; or about when to use the shorter and when the longer form. No, our greatest concern is much more about how to make it possible for those who offer instruction in faith to do so with joy. For the more they succeed in this, the more appealing will they be.[123]

It is *how* the catechist communicates Scripture's *narratio* that is of vital importance for Augustine. In particular, the catechist must be conscious of both bringing pleasure to the audience and taking pleasure in giving the speech. Both of these two aspects are vital for delivering a *narratio.* To be effective, one must keep in mind the needs of the audience, particularly regarding the education level of the inquirer.[124] But it is important that the catechist display cheerfulness (*hilaritate*) while delivering the speech as well. This is something Deogratias admits he struggles with. Augustine observes that there are six main reasons why a catechist becomes weary of delivering the *narratio*: first, because the catechist has advanced to a deeper understanding of Scripture and finds it irksome to descend to the level of the inquirer;[125] second, because the catechist is afraid of making a mistake or of inadvertently causing offence to a listener; third, because the catechist finds it childish and wearisome to be constantly rehearsing

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[123] *Cat. rud.* 2.4 (CCSL 46 123; Canning, 62): *quapropter non arduum est negotium, ea quae credenda insinuantur praecipere, unde et quo usque narranda sint; nec quomodo sit uarianda narratio, ut aliquando breuior, aliquando longior, semper tamen plena atque perfecta sit; et quando breuiore, et quando longiore sit utendum: sed quibus modis faciendum sit, ut gaudens quisque catechizet (tanto enim suauior erit, quanto magis id potuerit), ea cura maxima est.*

[124] *Cat. rud.* 6.10.

[125] *Cat. rud.* 2.4; cf. 2.3

familiar phrases that are suited to untrained ears;[126] fourth, because the listeners fail to respond,

making one grow discouraged; fifth, becausethe catechist would rather be doing something else,

but is obligated to explain the faith;[127] and sixth, because the catechist is distracted by something

else in one's life. Any of these six reasons could be cause for Deogratias's displeasure.

However, Augustine is most concerned with the first and third reasons, both of which

have to do with accommodating one's speech to the level of the audience. He states: "There you

have the main reason why, when we are giving newcomers to Christianity their initial grounding

in faith, our words seem trifling to us: for it pleases us to gain extraordinary insight but irks us to

have to give utterance to it in ordinary speech."[128] It is because the catechist himself has

advanced beyond this initial stage in his own reading of Scripture that he finds it difficult to

return to this stage for the sake of his audience. Yet, Augustine says, "in actual fact, we are given

a much more appreciative hearing when we ourselves enjoy performing our tasks. Then the

texture of our speech is suffused with the very delight that we take in speaking, and our words

flow more easily and more pleasingly."[129] So, if this task does not bring joy, Augustine writes,

"then we should consider what has been proposed to us by him who has shown us an example

that we might follow in his steps. For, however far removed our spoken words are from the

liveliness of our understanding, much greater still is the distance between our mortal flesh and

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[126] *Cat. rud.* 12.17.

[127] *Cat. rud.* 14.20.

[128] *Cat. rud.* 2.4 (CCSL 46 124; Canning, 62): *nulla maior causa est, cur nobis in imbuendis rudibus noster sermo uilescat, nisi quia libet inusitate cernere et taedet usitate proloqui.*

[129] *Cat. rud.* 2.4 (CCSL 46 124; Canning, 62): *cogitemus quid nobis praerogatum sit ab illo qui demonstrauit nobis exemplum, ut sequamur uestigia eius. et re quidem uera multo gratius audimur, cum et nos eodem opere delectamur: afficitur enim filum locutionis nostrae ipso nostro gaudio, et exit facilius atque acceptius.*

his [Christ's] equality with God."[130] The catechist is to mirror the pattern of divine

condescension. He goes on, likening the work of the catechist to a mother feeding her young

child, saying, "for a mother, there is more enjoyment in chewing food into tiny pieces and

spitting them into her little so's mouth than in chewing and gulping down larger portions

herself."[131] Again, he offers another maternal analogy, this time of a hen, when he says, "Nor

should we forget the image of the mother hen who covers her tender brood with soft feathers and

calls her peeping chicks to her side with anxious clucking; if these little ones in their pride run

away from the shelter of her wings, they become the prey of large birds."[132] He concludes,

"Thus, if our understanding finds its delight within, in the brightest of secret places, let it also

delight in the following insight into the ways of love: the more love goes down in a spirit of

service into the ranks fo the lowliest people, the more surely it rediscovers the quiet that is within

when its good conscience testifies that it seeks nothing of those to whom it goes down but their

eternal salvation."[133] To stoop to the level of one's audience ought to be a joyful task, Augustine

is claiming, for it mirrors the strategy present in the divine *narratio.*

Just like the preacher, the catechist is to follow the pattern of Christ and the pattern of

Scripture. However, he has the distinct task of conveying the divine *narratio* in a way that

resembles closely the most basic function of *narratio* in the rhetorical tradition—namely, its

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[130] *Cat. rud.* 10.15 (CCSL 46 138; Canning, 81): *quantumuis enim differat articulata uox nostra ab intellegentiae nostrae uiuacitate, longe differentior est mortalitas carnis ab aequalitate dei.*

[131] *Cat. rud.* 10.15 (CCSL 46 138; Canning, 81): *et tamen optant homines habere infantes, quibus id exhibeant: et suauius est matri minuta mansa inspuere paruulo filio quam ipsa mandere ac deuorare grandiora.*

[132] *Cat. rud.* 10.15 (CCSL 46 138; Canning, 81): *non ergo recedat de pectore etiam cogitatio gallinae illius, quae languidulis plumis teneros fetus operit et susurrantes pullos confracta uoce aduocat; cuius blandas alas refugientes superbi praeda fiunt alitibus.*

[133] *Cat. rud.* 10.15 (CCSL 46 138; Canning, 81): *si enim intellectus delectat in penetralibus sincerissimis, hoc etiam intelligere delectet, quomodo caritas, quanto officiosius descendit in infima, tanto robustius recurrit in intima per bonam conscientiam nihil quaerendi ab eis ad quos descendit, praeter eorum sempiternam salutem.*

function in a judicial oration. It is to be a clear, concise account of 'the facts', with the *causa* of

the love of God woven throughout. It is noteworthy that Augustine's very first piece of advice to

Deogratias is to be faithful to the *narratio* of Scripture itself, by describing the appropriate events

from salvation history that communicate the *causa* of Scripture, which is Christ.[134] In the hands

of the catechist, Scripture becomes a *narratio* that bears all the marks of a judicial speech. In this

way, "the mercy of God" is made present through the agency of the person giving the

instruction.[135]

Conclusion

In this chapter I have made the case that Augustine's communication to the catechumens, from

initial inquiry through their preparation for baptism, ought to be viewed as a sustained argument

for the character of the Catholic Church. Furthermore, I have suggested that he frames his

argument by the standard four-fold judicial speech pattern, since this genre was the most natural

means of accomplishing his task. His communication to the catechumens, then, should be seen in

terms of a single, expanded oration in which Augustine mediates the *narratio* of Scripture in a

manner that is intended to convince the catechumens that the Catholic Church is the true Church

and thus the locus of God's salvation. To this end, *De catechizandis rudibus* and Augustine's

sermons to the *competentes* together form a complete argument. Within this argument, the

narratio of Scripture functions in a manner very much like a *narratio* in a judicial oration. It is

the evidence of the Catholic Church's claim to be the true church, the unique place where one

finds salvation.

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[134] *Cat. rud.* 3.5.

[135] *Cat. rud.* 5.9 (CCSL 46 129; Canning, 74): *sed plane saepe adest misericordia dei per ministerium catechizantis.*

In a sermon he preached to newly baptised believers during the week following Easter, probably in the year 417 or 418, Augustine hints that this was, indeed, his strategy. He asks why Scripture records the seemingly insignificant detail of Jesus eating fish with his resurrected body (Luke 24:43). He answers that one of the reasons why Christ ate the fish was to *convince* his followers that he was truly alive. He did it so they would have *evidence* to believe. From this, Augustine draws out the hermeneutical principle that the whole scope of salvation history—the whole *narratio* of Scripture—can be read as the means by which Christ convinces us of who he is. Augustine tells his congregation, "O holy Church, listen and see; listen to the things foretold, see things fulfilled. It was your head who was trying to convince you, the Lord Christ; it was the head of the Church who was trying to convince you (*persuadebat*). . . . Look, it's happened, what was written; look, it's been fulfilled, what was foretold; look, it's been displayed, what was read."[136] The whole of Scripture can be read as an attempt to convince its readers of the truth found in Christ and his Church. When speaking to the catechumens, Augustine attempts to make this reading of Scripture clear.

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[136] *Serm.* 229J.4 (MA I 584; Hill, 6:292): *o ecclesia sancta, audi et uide: audi praedicta, uide conpleta. caput erat, quod persuadebat, dominus christus; caput ecclesiae erat, quod se uiuum, uerum, integrum, certum persuadebat, et ad fidem credentium perducebat. . . . ecce factum, quod scriptum: ecce impletum, quod praedictum: ecce exhibitum, quod lectum.*

4
FORMING THE IDENTITY OF THE NEOPHYTES

In the previous chapter, I began mapping Augustine's application of Scripture onto his conception of the spiritual maturation process. There I looked specifically at how he addresses the catechumens, who represent those at the first of three progressive stages in this process, and I made the case that he uses Scripture in a descriptive manner, akin to the role of *narratio* in a judicial oration, in order to present a persuasive argument for them to enter the Church through baptism. In the present chapter, I turn my attention to the second stage of the spiritual maturation process and look at how Augustine's use of Scripture changes immediately after these new Christians are baptised. At this second stage, I argue, Augustine applies Scripture in its proscriptive and prescriptive senses, drawing on the way *narratio* was commonly used in deliberative oratory. The central shift in how the neophytes relate to Scripture when compared to the catechumens, then, is that they now read it as active participants in the divine *narratio*, rather than as passive spectators evaluating and judging the credibility of the scriptural witness.[1] In making use of a deliberative strategy, Augustine exploits another dimension of *narratio* in order to bring about his goal of leading his congregation into a deeper spiritual engagement with Scripture.

To make my case, I will begin by briefly sketching the significance of two unique features in Augustine's sermons during the Easter Octave—his attention to ethics and what has been termed his "non-mystagogical" exegesis—and I will suggest that these features ought to

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[1] The term "neophyte" comes from the Greek *neophutos* (νεόφυτος), which literally means 'newly planted' (*neos* 'new' + *phuton* 'plant'). It is first used to speak of a 'new convert' by Paul in 1 Tim. 3:6.

alert us to the unique strategy he employs in these sermons.[2] While he follows the Christian tradition in emphasizing the significance of the neophytes' new post-baptismal identity, *how* he does this reveals a close affinity with strategies commonly found in deliberative orations. Drawing again on Pauline logic, this time from Romans 6, I suggest Augustine constructs a deliberative argument in these sermons in which he claims that who the neophytes have now become determines how they ought to live. I then spend the remainder of the chapter examining Augustine's argument in greater detail. I will, therefore, turn in the next place to expound on the first part of his strategy and will make the case that Augustine's sermons reveal an intention to embed the neophytes' new self-understanding in the liturgical context. Finally, I will look to his use of the same three key scriptural episodes that proved to be central in the previous chapter— creation, flood, and exodus—to expound on the second part of his strategy, in which, I argue, Scripture fulfills the function of a future-oriented *narratio*. As a result, it becomes clear that the *narratio* commonly found in a deliberative oration provides the pattern for Augustine's application of Scripture to the neophytes in these sermons. However, whereas in a deliberative oration the orator seeks to move the audience to a particular ethical decision, in his sermons to the neophytes Augustine has the deeper purpose of identity formation in mind.

A New Identity

The transition from catechumen to neophyte took place at baptism, marking the most significant step in the young Christian's journey of faith. Baptism was their birth into the Church, the beginning of their new life. Everything up to that point was designed to lead to initiation into the

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[2] I borrow this term from Reidar Aasgaard, "Ambrose and Augustine: Two Bishops on Baptism and Christian Identity," in *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism: Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity*, ed. David Hellholm et al. (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2011), 1271.

Church body. In baptism, one is born into the Church and inherits a new identity as a member of the ecclesial community.[3] From that point on, the baptised person is no longer the same person they were prior to baptism. It is no surprise, therefore, that the question of post-baptismal identity commonly played an important role in the fathers' reflections on baptism. It almost certainly served as the main theme Augustine would have heard in Ambrose's sermons after his own baptism in Milan, and it plays a prominent role in Augustine's sermons to the neophytes as well.[4] Augustine, following what he would have learned from Ambrose, consistently reinforces the notion that the neophytes have a new identity by speaking of the baptismal experience in terms of a new birth.[5] Romans 6 features prominently in this regard for both Ambrose and Augustine, as the means of asserting that the neophytes have participated in Christ's death and so now also participate in his life.[6] Just as Christ himself was born as an infant and grew into a man, Augustine explains, so also at baptism the neophytes are joined with Christ and begin to grow in him from newborn infants into mature Christians.[7] As Reidar Aasgaard has rightly pointed out, the most significant thrust of Augustine's teaching on baptism presents it as "an existential

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[3] The question of self-identity in late antiquity more generally has been the subject of scholarly interest in recent years. See, for example, Richard Miles, ed., *Constructing Identities in Late Antiquity* (Routledge: London and New York, 1999); and "Part III: Identities" in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 167-280.

[4] The main sources for Ambrose's teaching on baptism are: *De sacramentis*, a series of six sermons delivered during Easter week which were likely unedited, and *De mysteriis*, a similar series which was edited by Ambrose himself for public consumption. For discussions regarding the influence of Ambrose on Augustine, see William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 79-105. Cf. Philip Rousseau, "Augustine and Ambrose: The Loyalty and Single-Mindedness of a Disciple," *Augustiniana* 27 (1977): 151-165. In my view, Rousseau's work exaggerates the influence of Ambrose on Augustine. For a more balanced take on Ambrose's influence, see J. Patout Burns, "Ambrose Preaching to Augustine: The Shaping of Faith," *CollAug*, 1990, 373-386; N. B. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), esp. 18-19 and 240–243.

[5] For Augustine's description of baptism as a new birth, see *serm.* 370.4.

[6] For Ambrose's use of new birth imagery in relation to baptism, see *Myst.* 5.59; on the metaphor of death and new life, see *Myst.* 21; *Sacr.* 2.23; 3.2; 6.8; on his weaving together of both metaphors, see *Sacr.* 3.2.

[7] *Serm.* 370.4.

turning point" in which "a drastic re-orientation of life takes place" and which brings about "a

fundamental shift of self-perception and status for those involved."[8] This emphasis resonates

with what he would have learned from Ambrose in Milan and with what is found in other

patristic sources more broadly. However, how he does this and the implications he draws from it

are significantly different from his theological predecessors. This, I suggest, points to the

presence of a unique underlying strategy that is consistent with what we have observed thus far

in this study.

A Non-Mystagogical Strategy

Augustine's sermons reveal a significant break from what he would have experienced in Milan

and what would have commonly occurred elsewhere throughout the third and fourth centuries.

While Ambrose and many other fathers speak often of the transformative power of the baptismal

rite and therefore attempt to explain its mystical significance, Augustine spends relatively little

time discussing the rite itself in these sermons. Instead, Augustine seems far more interested in

exhorting the neophytes to live ethical lives. He continually reminds them to live in a way that

reflects who they now are as the body of Christ, often warning them not to follow the example of

bad Catholics. Even his exegesis bears the imprint of his unique approach. Ambrose, for

example, uses a broad spectre of Old Testament passages to show either how baptism is

prefigured in Scripture or to elucidate certain aspects of the mystery contained in the baptismal

rite.[9] Augustine, however, uses a far narrower selection of Old Testament passages, relying

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[8] Aasgaard, "Ambrose," 1255.

[9] Certain biblical stories have a particularly central place in Ambrose's repertoire as prefiguring various aspects of baptism and thus explaining dimensions of the mystery present in the rite. He appeals to the waters and the Spirit in the creation story to emphasize that the mystery of baptism is prefigured in the very creation of the world. *Myst*. 3.9. Similarly, he takes the account of the flood as a prefiguration of baptism, and he uses it to explain as an allegory what happens in baptism: the water is that in which the flesh is dipped and all wickedness is washed away; the wood

instead on a tapestry of short New Testament verses that speak of the unity between Christ and

the Church or of how Christians ought to live. As Aasgaard points out, these differences signal

that Augustine employs a distinct and unique strategy for impressing on the neophytes their new

identity, noting that "Augustine's strategy for the shaping of Christian identity is more

psychologically and existentially rooted" than is commonly found in the other fathers, and that

he "particularly stresses the 'before and after' status of the individual" instead of the mystery

contained in the baptismal rite itself.[10] A key difference, therefore, between Augustine's teaching

on baptism and that found in other patristic sources is that Augustine's sermons appear to have a

less mystagogical character.[11]

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is the means of salvation; the dove is the Spirit, who brings new life; the olive branch signifies new life; the raven is a figure of sin, which departs at baptism and does not return. *Myst*. 3.10–11. Cf. *Sacr*. 1.23; 2.1, where he claims that Christian sacraments predate the rites of the Jews. The exodus of the Israelites through the Red Sea also prefigures baptism, he teaches, and in that sin is swallowed up in the water of baptism but that virtue remains unharmed. *Myst*. 3.12. Cf. *Sacr*. 1.19–22; *Myst*. 3.13. He looks to the spring of Mara into which Moses put a piece of wood, and he points out that the water by itself is not efficacious but must be accompanied by the cross. This he uses to admonish his audience not to judge the rite based on outward appearance but rather on the inward reality. *Myst*. 3.14-15; cf. *Sacr*. 2.12–13. Also, the Holy of Holies of the temple in Jerusalem can be seen as prefiguring the Christian baptistery. *Myst*. 2.5; *Sacr*. 4.1-4. Again, the story about the healing of the Syrian Naaman in the river Jordan (2 Kings. 5:1–14), he says, teaches that the mystery of baptism has nothing to do with the quality of water but rather with the grace of God. *Myst*. 3.16-4.21; cf. *Sacr*. 1.13–14; 2.8–9. He places the healing angel at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1–9) in contrast to the free availability of baptism to any who genuinely seek it. *Myst*. 4.22–23; cf. *Sacr*. 2.3–7. And he says of the baptism of Jesus (John 1:32–34) that the dove descending on Jesus signifies the reality that was foreshadowed by the dove in the flood account. *Myst*. 4.24–26; cf. *Sacr*. 1.15–19. Ambrose's frequent use of the Song of Songs also deserves mention. He interprets it allegorically as referring to the sacraments in general. *Myst*. 9.55–58. and in particular to the ointment after baptism. *Myst*. 6.29-7.41. Two complimentary exegetical strategies—finding prefigurations in the Old Testament and deriving implications about the mystery from them—are therefore central in Ambrose's use of Scripture to explain the mystery of baptism.

[10] Aasgaard, "Ambrose," 1273.

[11] Aasgaard observes: "Augustine has little of the mystagogical interest characteristic of Ambrose." Aasgaard, "Ambrose," 1271. For an introduction to Ambrose's liturgical praxis and theology of baptism, see Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 634–647; also Thomas M. Finn, *Early Christian Baptism and the Catechumenate: West and East Syria* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier and the Liturgical Press, 1992), 57–76. For a detailed presentation of Ambrose's interpretation of baptism in comparison with a number of other fathers, see H. M. Riley, *Christian Initiation: A Comparative Study of the Interpretation of the Baptismal Liturgy in the Mystagogical Writings of Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, Theodore Mopsuestia and Ambrose of Milan* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1974). For an interesting discussion of the praxis of baptism at Easter, see Paul F. Bradshaw, "*Diem baptismo sollemniorem*: Initiation and Easter in Christian Antiquity" in *Living Water, Sealing Spirit: Readings on Christian Initiation*, ed. Maxwell E. Johnson (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 137-147. Bradshaw argues that the idea in liturgical scholarship of an early Christian (3rd–4th century) preference for paschal baptism is

But how is this less mystagogical character of his sermons to be accounted for? Aasgaard suggests that the answer to this question is found by recognizing the audience Augustine was addressing. He claims that it is a mistake to interpret Augustine's Easter sermons as if they were directed specifically to the neophytes. Instead, he maintains, the tone of these sermons suggests that they were preached primarily to the gathered faithful who would have been present throughout the Octave week.[12] Indeed, as Suzanne Poque has already reminded us, the instruction Augustine offered during the Easter week was given in the presence of both the neophytes and the gathered assembly.[13] But the presence of the faithful during the Easter week should not lead us to conclude that they are his primary audience. Augustine himself suggests the contrary when he states that the entire Easter week is dedicated specifically to "the sacraments of the infants" (*sacramentis infantium deputantur*).[14] Therefore, while it is important to keep in mind that the neophytes were not the only members of his audience during the Easter week, this fact alone is not enough to explain the unique features of Augustine's Easter sermons.

Instead, as William Harmless points out, Augustine's seeming lack of emphasis on the mystagogical character of baptism in these sermons is at least partly due to the fact that he follows the much less common patristic practice of explaining baptism to the candidates *before* they were baptised.[15] The neophytes would, therefore, presumably already understand the

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untenable, and that it was primarily a local custom in the Roman and North African churches in the latter half of the 4th century.

[12] Aasgaard, "Ambrose," 1272.

[13] Poque notes that "in Hippo, the Octave of Easter was a week especially set aside for catechesis, and the faithful were no less eager for instruction than the newly baptised." Suzanne Poque, "Introduction," *Augustin d'Hippone: Sermons pour la páque* SC 116 (Paris: Cerf, 2003), 91.

[14] *Serm.* 228.1 (PL 38 1101; Hill, 6:245).

[15] Harmless, *Augustine*, 306. See also, André Audet, "Notes sur les catéchèses baptismales de saint augustin," *Augustinus Magister* 1:151-60; Poque, "Introduction," 81-82. Unfortunately, none of these sermons have survived.

mystagogical character of the rite when they were baptised. It is only natural, then, that he spends very little time expounding on the rite itself during the Easter week. For Harmless, Augustine's strategy resembles most closely that of John Chrysostom in this respect, for he too preached on baptism before the candidates participated in the rite and tended to stress the ethical dimensions of Scripture in his sermons.[16] Based on this parallel, Harmless implies that the decidedly "paraenetic slant" of Augustine's sermons is not in fact unique, but rather follows an alternative, albeit less common, patristic practice.[17]

But the differences between Augustine and the majority of other patristic sources goes further than simply a difference in when they preached on the baptismal rite. Even if Harmless sufficiently explains why Augustine's sermons contain a strong ethical tone, his explanation says nothing about why Augustine does not use Scripture mystagogically in other sermons throughout the week either.[18] His sermons on the Eucharist, for example, show a lack of mystagogical exegesis, just as the rest of the sermons throughout the Easter Week do. Surely his explanation of baptism before the catechumens were actually baptised does not affect his preaching on the Eucharist as well. A far more suitable explanation for Augustine's approach requires attention to a much more pervasive underlying strategy.

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[16] Harmless, *Augustine*, 69-78. Harmless finds a similar pattern in Theodore of Mopsuestia as well. For a representative example of those who explain the mystery of baptism only *after* one participates in it, he points to Cyril of Jerusalem.

[17] Harmless, *Augustine*, 336.

[18] While Harmless's point that Augustine follows the less common patristic tradition of teaching on baptism before the candidates were actually baptised is true, the inference that this results in a less mystagogical and more ethical tone in his Easter week sermons does not follow. It has been well-noted that Chrysostom's sermons as a whole tend to focus on the moral and ethical dimensions of Scripture. If his emphasis on ethics when preaching on baptism is not to be explained by the fact that he treats baptism before the catechumens are baptised, but rather as a part of his preaching style more generally, then the similarity between him and Augustine breaks down. For an introduction to Chrysostom's general orientation in this regard, see J. N. D. Kelley, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom – Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995). For a discussion of his exegesis in particular, see Robert Hill, "Introduction" in *St. John Chrysostom: Commentary on the Psalms* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Press, 1998).

A Deliberative Strategy

Even if Augustine's practice is partly in line with a minority of patristic sources, we are still left with the important question of why Augustine departs from the practice he would have presumably known best from experience and adopt such a unique approach to these particular sermons. Surely this suggests that he makes a conscious decision to do so and so has a particular strategy in mind. But, what is this strategy? I claim that, giving heed to the influence of his rhetorical training, as well as to the influence of Romans 6 on his thinking, a strategy emerges which both explains the unique features of his sermons to the neophytes and also fits squarely within his broader communicative strategy to those under his care at Hippo that I have been tracing in this study. Comparing his sermons to the neophytes with those he preached to the catechumens, there is a development that takes place; Augustine's audience has changed vantage points. As catechumens, they were yet to be formally accepted into the Church; they were still on the path to their conversion. However, after baptism they are insiders, and so Augustine is now preaching to the converted. As such, his strategy shifts and his use of Scripture changes as well. Scripture is no longer a record used to justify the Church's character; now it becomes the source for his instruction on how they ought to live.

One of the streams of influence on how Augustine preaches to the neophytes is quite possibly Paul. Just as we found a strong reliance on Pauline logic in his sermons to the catechumens, so also once again we find that Augustine's strategy in these sermons to the neophytes is rooted in Pauline logic. While his argument to the catechumens followed closely the logic of Romans 10, here he relies on Romans 6 as the foundation for his case. In Romans 6 Paul speaks about how participation in Christ's death through baptism results in a new birth; one dies

to sin and is made alive to God. In this change of identity, one goes from being a slave to sin to being a slave to righteousness. Thus, Paul is at pains to argue, one must live a life in accordance with one's new identity. It is on the basis of one's new identity, which has come about through their inclusion into Christ, that he asserts they must live righteous lives. As we will see, Augustine's argument follows a very similar logical progression. It is on the basis of their new identity that he makes his strong ethical appeal.

Furthermore, it is perhaps based on this Pauline influence that Augustine comes to incorporate elements from the deliberative genre as the framework for these sermons. His continual ethical appeal stands in support of this claim. As a trained rhetorician, Augustine would have been aware that strong ethical appeals usually belong to the deliberative genre precisely because they require one to be forward-looking.[19] Paul seeks to persuade his readers to live righteous lives in Romans 6 by looking to the future. He tells his readers that those who persevere in their new identity will "be united to him in a resurrection like his" (v. 5; RSV), and will "never die again" (v. 9) but will have "eternal life" (v. 23). Conversely, persisting in doing evil will lead one to certain "death" (vv. 16, 23). By looking forward and comparing two potential outcomes, the argument Paul makes in this passage resembles very closely a deliberative argument.

But these two features do not exhaust the characteristics of a deliberative oration. The deliberative genre carried a wide range of definitions and applications within the rhetorical tradition. Still, there are four key, defining features that can be discerned amid the varied tradition. First, there is the most obvious feature of decision-making. Deliberative speeches were given precisely to persuade an audience through deliberation. Most often, this decision-making

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[19] See *Rhet*. 1354a 25-1354b 13.

was associated with political speeches given to an assembly.[20] However, this does not mean this genre was limited to a political setting. Quintilian, for example, prefers to see "a more varied field of eloquence" within the deliberative genre, including private discussions on ethical matters.[21] The key, no matter what context the speech occurrs in, is the fact that it calls its audience to weigh options for a future course of action and make a decision on a particular matter in the present that carries significant future implications.

This brings us to the second defining feature of deliberative speeches—namely, that they were oriented toward the future.[22] In contrast to the judicial speech, which usually concerned matters of the past, and the epideictic speech, which normally dealt with the present, the deliberative speech was always looking toward the future. The decisions made in the present were advocated on the basis of their future implications. This should not be taken to mean that it had no concern for the present or past whatsoever; in fact, Quintilian explains that one should always look to the present or past in order to draw out more fully a persuasive argument. However, this was only to be done with the future in mind.

Third, and most importantly for the present study, deliberative speeches were marked by the fact that they trade on comparison. The task of the orator in a deliberative speech was to persuade the audience of making a particular decision based on the choices at hand. Therefore, "as a rule," Quintilian tells us, "all deliberative speeches are based simply on comparison (*Ita fere omnis suasoria nihil est aliud quam comparatio*)."[23] The comparison could take a number of different forms. It could be used to contrast the present situation with a future proposal, or to

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[20] *Orat*. 2.82.

[21] *Inst*. 3.8.15.

[22] *Inst*. 3.8.22-25.

[23] *Inst*. 3.8.34.

show continuity between a past set of events and a future proposal. An orator would often

provide a *narratio* oriented toward the future that was designed to illustrate the benefits or

dangers of taking a particular action in the present.[24]

The final feature concerned the "aims" (Greek, τῆλε; Latin, *fines* or *partes*) of

deliberative speeches, around which an argument would be built. According to Aristotle, the aim

of deliberative oratory must always be to highlight the useful (συμφέρον) over against the

harmful (βλαβερός). The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* posits *utilitas* as the main aim of deliberative

orations, either *utilitas tua* ("utility of preservation") or *utilitas honesta* ("utility of

honourability"), two themes that would remain fairly constant within discussions surrounding the

aims of deliberative oratory in the Latin tradition.[25] It was based on these ends that the

deliberative genre came to be associated with speeches that have a particularly ethical slant. As

we will see, however, Augustine's aim follows Paul and extends beyond utility or honourability

to the question of identity. It is not simply that it is useful or honourable for a Christian to live a

righteous life, but it is the only life that consistently reflects who a Christian truly is.

These four features produced a fairly standard means of constructing an argument in a

deliberative oration. The orator would present the audience with an envisioned future, or

"proposals of reality," in narrative form and appeal to the audience to "contribute to [the

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[24] Cicero notes that, while Aristotle held that the end goal of deliberative oratory was utility in policy, he himself holds it to be utility and honour (*utilitas* and *honestas*). *De inu.* 2.51.156. Quintilian follows Cicero in this respect as well. *Inst.* 3.8.1. The honour involved was based on the four cardinal virtues defined by Hellenistic philosophers: wisdom, justice, courage, and temperance. See George A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and its Christian and Secular Tradition From Ancient to Modern Times*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 107. It is worth also noting that the third basic genre, epideictic, used *narratio* in a way very similar to the deliberative genre, so it does not require separate treatment here. In fact, Aristotle treated them under one heading as well.

[25] *Rhet. Her.* 3.2-9; Cicero and Quintilian both continue to emphasize these two aims as well.

proposals'] transformation into effective reality" by taking action.[26] Quintilian advises that the orator compare the future proposal with those in the present or past, since "reference to historical parallels is the quickest method of securing assent."[27] He therefore commends the liberal use of historical examples in deliberative oratory, drawn from the past or present, since "all authorities are with good reason agreed that there is no subject to which they are better suited, since as a rule history seems to repeat itself and the experience of the past is a valuable support for reason."[28] George Kennedy has summed up deliberative oratory in its most basic form as an argument "that an action is in the self-interest of the audience."[29] The goal of the orator in a deliberative speech, then, was always to move (*movere*) the audience to a particular action; and the key strategy was comparison.

To be sure, the technical sense of *narratio* was not essential for a deliberative oration. Very often there was no need to rehearse the 'facts of the case' at all, at least not in the sense that it would be found in the judicial genre. Speaking of deliberative speeches, Quintilian states: "As regards the *narratio*, this is never required in speeches on private subjects . . . because everyone is acquainted with the question at issue."[30] Yet, there is an application of *narratio* that is essential for deliberative orations. Despite claiming that *narratio* is not required for a deliberative speech, Quintilian also recommends narrating examples in one's speech. Because many minds "are not to be moved by discoursing on the nature of virtue," he suggests that it is most effective to set up

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[26] Thomás Albaladejo, "The Three Types of Speeches in Quintilian, Book III: Communicative Aspects of the Political and Legal Features of Rhetorical Discourse" in *Quintilian and the Law: The Art of Persuasion in Law and Politics* ed. Olga Eveline Tellegen-Couperus (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), 57.

[27] *Inst*. 3.8.36.

[28] *Inst.* 3.8.66.

[29] George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 146.

[30] *Inst*. 3.7.10.

a comparison between the decision one is arguing for and the peril of not following that advice "by pointing out the appalling consequences that will follow the opposite policy."[31] He recommends that the orator present the audience with an imagined future based on taking his proposed course of action and then compare it with an opposite proposal—the result of either actively choosing a different course of action or choosing to do nothing at all. The key to success in this strategy is to have the audience place themselves in the two narratives the orator proposes. This is why Quintilian notes that "appeals to the emotions . . . are especially necessary in deliberative oratory."[32] The audience must enter the narratives in order to evaluate and compare them. They must feel the terror of the one proposal and the joy of the other in order to decide which is the preferred course of action. To consider the matter fully, an audience would have to assume the role assigned to them within the narrative by the orator.[33] Embedded within this process of inclusion, and perhaps more fundamental to it, is another comparison. There is an inherent comparison between the audience's present context (the way life presently is) with an envisioned future *narratio* (the way life would be if a decision was made one way or another). An orator would not succeed, after all, if the audience did not perceive his recommended course of action to be superior to their present situation. Conversely, if the orator were trying to persuade his audience not to take a particular course of action, he would need to show how that action would bring about a future that is worse than the present situation. In both cases, the orator's case rests on comparing the result of a proposed course of action with the audience's present context.

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[31] *Inst*. 3.7.39.

[32] *Inst*. 3.7.12.

[33] *Inst*. 3.8.6.

It is an argument based on comparison, I claim, that we find at the heart of Augustine's sermons to the neophytes. However, instead of drawing out the contrast between the neophytes' present context and his proposed future, Augustine's argument rests on maintaining the continuity between their present context and their future. This logic is Pauline, and it governs Augustine's adaptation of the deliberative genre in these sermons. Therefore, his argument rests on two important points: first, he must establish the significance of the neophytes' new liturgical context for their identity as Catholics; and second, he must describe a future in which they can envision how this identity is lived out.

Conclusion

Augustine follows the standard patristic practice of preaching on the neophytes' new post-baptismal identity during the week following Easter Sunday. However, the way he does this and the implications he draws from it are unique. Instead of using Scripture primarily to interpret the mysteries of baptism and the Eucharist for the neophytes, Augustine uses Scripture to construct an argument designed to persuade the neophytes to live ethical lives. This is not explained by the fact that Augustine was preaching to an assembly that included both neophytes and the faithful, nor is it the result of him preaching on the baptismal rite before the neophytes were baptised. Instead, it suggests that Augustine makes use of a deliberate strategy, which he would have detected at work in Romans 6. His emphasis is not on the neophytes' experience of baptism because he is not constructing a *narratio* that is descriptive, as he did for the catechumens, but rather one that is prescriptive and proscriptive, fixed squarely on the future. It is a narrative in which the neophytes can understand their new identity and thus how they ought to live. In the

remainder of this chapter, I will turn to examine this strategy in Augustine's sermons in greater

detail.

The Liturgical Context

Augustine's sermons to the neophytes show him urging his audience to live as good Christians

moving forward based on the comparison he draws and continuity he finds between their new

liturgical context and the future *narratio* he gleans from Scripture. The first part of Augustine's

strategy, then, is to establish the neophytes within the liturgical context. One of the significant

results of baptism is that the baptised relate to the liturgical life of the Church in a new way.

Catechumens were not used to being active participants in the liturgy, at least not full

participants; they were not even allowed to observe the liturgy of the Eucharist. So when they do

become full participants at baptism, embracing their new place within the liturgical life of the

Church is not a simple thing for them to do. Augustine, therefore, needs to make an effort to

establish the liturgical context as that in which they base their new self-identify. This is a vital

first step if he is going to compare their liturgical context with the *narratio* of Scripture.

There is a discernable pattern present in Augustine's sermons to the neophytes which

suggests that he was especially keen to drive home the importance of their inclusion into the

liturgical life of the Church. The Octave week, from the Easter vigil through the Octave Sunday,

is structured around four distinct phases—the Easter vigil, Easter Sunday, Easter week, and the

Octave Sunday—each of which plays a role in initiating the neophytes into their new liturgical

context. There are 79 sermons that have been preserved which can be confidently placed during

this period of time.[34] While it remains impossible to date most of these sermons with absolute

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[34] This is a conservative count and does not include the series of fragments (5 sermons) on the creation account
(*serms.* 229R-229) or the 17 other sermons that have been tentatively placed during this time but have internal

precision, it is possible to determine with a fair degree of confidence in which phase of the Easter

Octave each of these sermons belongs. When these sermons are then organized according to the

phases in which they belong, we can see how he establishes the liturgical life of the Church as

the present context in which the neophytes derive their identity.

Phase 1: Easter Vigil

The first phase of the neophytes' inclusion consists of the Easter vigil, which began at sunset of

Holy Saturday when the congregation, including the faithful and those preparing for baptism,

would keep vigil throughout the night.[35] Augustine typically began the vigil by offering a short

introductory sermon addressing the significance of the vigil and exhorting those present to

remain steadfast throughout the night.[36] The rest of the vigil consisted largely of Scripture

readings, songs, and prayer. At some point, the candidates for baptism would stand up, one by

one, and recite the Creed to the assembled congregation.[37] Before dawn, Augustine and the other

ministers would lead the candidates from the basilica to the baptistery, where they would be

baptised.[38] This was the highlight of the night, in which the candidates were born into the Church

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evidence that raises significant doubts about their placement. If these sermons were included, the total count would be 101 sermons. For a list of all these sermons, see the chart provided by Éric Rebilllard in "*Sermones*" in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia,* ed. Alan Fitzgerald and John Cavadini (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 774-789.

[35] In the reconstruction of the vigil night and the baptismal rite in Hippo, I rely principally on the reconstruction provided by Harmless, "Baptism" in *Augustine Through the Ages*, esp. 86-87; and also *Augustine*, 300-345.

[36] We have 13 sermons that were likely preached at the beginning of the vigil: *serm.* 219; *serm.* 220; *serm.* 221; *serm.* 222; *serm.* 223B; *serm.* 223C; *serm.* 223D; *serm.* 223F; *serm.* 223G; *serm.* 223H; *serm.* 223I; *serm.* 223J; *serm.* 223K. However, because these sermons were preached before the neophytes were actually baptised, they are not of particular interest for my purposes here.

[37] *Serm.* 59.1; *Conf.* 8.2.5.

[38] In all likelihood Psalm 41 was sung as they made their way to the baptistery. See *en. Ps.* 41.1. Once the candidates were in the baptistery, they would turn to the west and renounce Satan, and then, to signify the radical newness of the life they were embarking on, they would turn to the east and swear their allegiance to Christ. *En. Ps.* 102.19. At

and became her *infantes*.[39] After emerging from the font, the newly baptised would symbolize

their new identity by donning new robes, likely made of white linen, as well as sandals and

perhaps a head covering, all of which they wore for the following eight days.[40] Upon their return

to the main basilica, they would be greeted by the faithful and would receive communion for the

first time.[41]

Finally, before dismissing the crowd, Augustine would offer a brief concluding sermon.

We have three such sermons that have been preserved.[42] These sermons are significant because

they mark the first post-baptismal sermons the neophytes would have heard and so address the

neophytes as new members of the Church for the first time.[43] The common point running through

these three sermons is that a significant change has taken place through their participation in

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this point, the water would be sanctified, and the candidates would strip off their clothes and descend into the font, one by one, where they would then be baptised. There is some uncertainty over the exact formula used by Augustine in baptism. On a number of occasions he explains that baptism took place "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (*bapt.* 3.14.19; 6.25.46; *ep.* 23.4; *c. litt. Pet.* 2.81.178). Or it is possible that the triple interrogation may have substituted for the Matthean formula, and that these interrogations alternated with three separate submersions, as was the case in Ambrose's practice (R. DeLatte, "St. Augustin et le baptême. Étude liturgico-historique du ritual baptismal des adultes chez saint Augustin," *Questions Liturgiques* 56 (1975): 177-223; 210-11). When they emerged from the water, candidates were consecrated by the sign of the cross on their heads, the invoking of the "sevenfold Spirit" over them, and having hands laid on them. *Serm.* 229M.2. Augustine labelled this the "sacrament of chrism," which was included among the visible signs, right alongside baptism itself (*c. litt. Pet.* 2.105.239). See Harmless, *Augustine*, 354-369.

[39] It is beyond the scope of the study to address Augustine's theology of baptism itself. For an initial introduction, however, see J. Patout Burns, "Christ and the Holy Spirit in Augustine's Theology of Baptism," in *Augustine: From Rhetor to Theologian*, ed. Joanne McWilliam (Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1992), 161-71; and William Harmless, "Christ the Pediatrician: Infant Baptism and Christological Imagery in the Pelagian Controversy," *AugStud* 28 (1997): 7-34.

[40] See *serm.* 120; *serm.* 123; *serm.* 260C.7; *serm.* 376A.1.

[41] This would be the first time they witnessed the liturgy of the Eucharist. According to the *disciplini arcani*, any unbaptised in the congregation were to be dismissed before the liturgy of the Eucharist.

[42] *Serm.* 223A; *serm.* 223E; *serm.* 228A (fragment).

[43] See *serm.* 223A; *serm.* 223E; *serm.* 228A (fragment); *serm.* 363. These rituals were likely very similar to the ones Augustine himself underwent under the leadership of Ambrose in Milan. See *Conf.* 9.6.14. Augustine does not say in the Confessions that he was baptized by Ambrose, but he mentions this in a letter (*ep.*147.52). It is worth noting, however, that in Hippo, Augustine developed his own baptismal liturgy; on this, see Ferguson, *Baptism*, 778–789.

baptism. In *serm.* 228A, Augustine says that, in baptism, the neophytes "experience the setting of the old life, and initiate their entry into the new."[44] In *serm.* 223E, he states that they have been given a new beginning, and all their past sins have been obliterated.[45] And in *serm.* 223A, he explains how the change that has been wrought in them is so drastic that they must look upon the world with new eyes, through which they will find God.[46] His message is clear: by their participation in the rite they have ceased to be who they previously were.

Immediately at baptism, then, the neophytes' initiation as full participants in the liturgy has already begun. The rites surrounding baptism, as well as baptism itself, symbolize the radical break with one's previous identity and the newness of one's post-baptismal life. This initiation of new identity takes place at the precise point of full entry into the liturgical life of the Church, after which the baptised are welcome to participate in the Eucharist—the pinnacle of the Church's liturgical life—for the first time. The sermons that conclude the vigil reinforce this point and so prepare the way for Augustine to insist on the importance of the liturgical context throughout the rest of the week. By becoming full participants in the liturgical life of the Church, the neophytes cannot identify as the same people they once were. The context in which their identity and new way of life is formed is now the liturgical life of the Church.

Phase 2: Easter Sunday

Though they were, no doubt, exhausted from the vigil, the neophytes would be expected to return just a few hours later for a second Eucharist and specific instruction concerning the Lord's

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[44] *Serm.* 228A (RB 84 263; Hill, 6:248): *hoc est sacramentum, in quo hi qui baptizantur uitae ueteris experiuntur occasum, et nouae exordiuntur ingressum.*

[45] *Serm.* 223E.2.

[46] *Serm.* 223A.1.

table.[47] Thus began the second phase of their post-baptismal initiation. There would be at least two main sermons the neophytes would have heard on Easter Sunday: the sermon addressed to the gathered assembly; and special instruction regarding the Eucharist, which was delivered to the neophytes specifically. Six sermons have come down to us that were preached to the gathered assembly on Easter morning.[48] In addition to preaching on the resurrection in these sermons, Augustine is also sure to reinforce the significant change of identity that the neophytes have undergone through baptism the previous night. The change that has been wrought in them is as drastic, he insists, as when God brought light from darkness.[49] They are now newborn infants whose identity must be formed in the Church.[50]

However, what is more important during this second phase is that, after the liturgy of the word, the neophytes were given a Eucharistic catechesis, in which they were taught about the significance of the Eucharist. If their inclusion in the liturgy through baptism was the focal point of the first phase, their inclusion in the Eucharist is the focus of the second phase. We have five such sermons, which were delivered only hours after the neophytes had received their first Eucharist and just moments before they would receive it for the second time.[51] In these sermons, Augustine is at pains to show how the neophytes' new identity is grounded in the liturgical

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[47] This second sermon would be preached to the entire congregation. Everyone but the neophytes would be dismissed at a certain point, at which time the neophytes received additional instruction regarding the Lord's supper. See *serm.* 227; *serm.* 229; *serm.* 229A; *serm.* 272. See also *serm.* 228B, though its authenticity has been seriously challenged. See Harmless, *Augustine*, 317, n. 86.

[48] *Serm.* 119; *serm.* 120; *serm.* 121; *serm.* 225; *serm.* 226; *serm.* 228. For the most part, Augustine addresses the whole congregation in these sermons, speaking about Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection from the prologue to John's Gospel. This was one of the standard texts from which Augustine preached every Easter. See Hill's comments in *Sermons* WSA III/6, 238, n. 1.

[49] See *Serm.* 120.3; *serm.* 225.4; *serm.* 226; *serm.* 228.1.

[50] *Serm.* 121.4.

[51] *Serm.* 227; *serm.* 272; *serm.* 228B; *serm.* 229; *serm.* 229A. These sermons are the only record we have of Augustine explicitly preaching on the Eucharist.

context. The strong connection he makes between who they now are as baptised Christians and the elements of the Eucharist which they receive anchors the link between their post-baptismal identity and the liturgical context more broadly. In *serm.* 227, he states: "If you receive them [the bread and wine] well, you are yourselves what you receive."[52] He explains that, just as the loaf of bread was made by joining together separate grains of wheat through being ground and moistened with water, so also the neophytes were grounded together into a single loaf through their time as *competentes* and were moistened at baptism. They were then baked into the body of Christ through the fire of the Holy Spirit when they were anointed. Furthermore, they will also become further confirmed in their identity by partaking of the bread. Because the bread is the body of Christ, by partaking of it the neophytes continue to be transformed into the body of Christ.[53] Thus, he concludes, "you are beginning to receive what you have also begun to be."[54] Their identity is, therefore, predicated on their continual participation in the Eucharist.[55] In this way, Augustine shows them that, just as their entrance into the liturgical life of the Church marks the point at which they ceased to be who they were, so also the liturgical life of the Church provides the context in which their new identity is sustained.

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[52] *Serm.* 227. (PL 38 1099; Hill, 6:242): *Si bene accepistis, vos estis quod accepistis.* This phrase, or one very similar to it, is found in each of the four Eucharistic sermons. See *serm.* 228B.4; *serm.* 229A.1; *serm.* 272.

[53] *Serm.* 228B.1-3.

[54] *Serm.* 228B.4 (MA 1 19; Hill, 6:250): *accipere ergo incipitis quod et esse coepistis.* Similarly, he states in *Serm.* 272 (PL 38 1247): *Si ergo vos estis corpus Christi et membra, mysterium vestrum in mensa Dominica positum est: mysterium vestrum accipitis.* There is some disagreement over when this sermon was preached. The Maurists have classified it as a sermon preached at Pentecost, which Hill has followed (WSA III/7, 298 n. 1). However, most of the other authorities hold that it was actually preached on Easter Sunday.

[55] *Serm.* 229A.1.

Phase 3: Easter Week

For the next week, the neophytes would attend church daily and would be set apart from the rest of the congregation, standing prominently in the *cancelli* and wearing their white robes.[56] In the 38 sermons we have from the Monday to Saturday following Easter, Augustine's sermons take on a seemingly less structured character, dealing with a variety of theological matters. However, there is a common theme uniting these sermons.[57] Augustine explains that, during the Easter week, his goal is to expound on "the true Christ and the true Church, to make sure we are not mistaken in either of them, by introducing the wrong bride to the holy bridegroom, or by presenting the holy bride with someone other than her true husband."[58] As he has just explained to the neophytes, they have been included in the Church, Christ's body, by virtue of their participation in his death and resurrection. These sermons, then, are just as much about who they now are as Christ's body as they are about the marriage between Christ and his Church. Therefore, together, Augustine tells his audience, they will reflect on their Head, on their Father, and on their inheritance as a means of coming to properly see the relationship between Christ and his Church.[59]

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[56] The *cancelli* was an area sectioned off by a railing where the bishop, presbyters, and deacons normally stood. See *serm.* 260C.7.

[57] *Serm.* 146; *serm.* 229E; *serm.* 229F; *serm.* 229G; *serm.* 229H; *serm.* 229I; *serm.* 229J; *serm.* 229K; *serm.* 229L; *serm.* 229M; *serm.* 229N; *serm.* 229O; *serm.* 229P; *serm.* 230; *serm.* 231; *serm.* 232; *serm.* 233; *serm.* 234; *serm.* 235; *serm.* 236; *serm.* 236A; *serm.* 237; *serm.* 238; *serm.* 239; *serm.* 243; *serm.* 244; *serm.* 245; *serm.* 246; *serm.* 247; *serm.* 248; *serm.* 249; *serm.* 250; *serm.* 251; *serm.* 252; *serm.* 252A; *serm.* 253; *serm.* 254; *serm.* 255A; *serm.* 256. Not included in my count are *Tract. Ep. Jo.* 1, 2, 3, 4, and fragments of sermons on creation found in *serms.* 229R-229V—all of which belong to Easter week as well.

[58] *Serm.* 238.1 (PL 38 1125; Hill, 7:56): *Sic sacra perennisque evangelica lectio nobis demonstrat verum Christum, et veram Ecclesiam, ne in aliquo eorum erremus, aut sancto sponso aliam pro alia supponamus, aut sanctae sponsae non suum virum sed alium importemus.*

[59] He states: "reflect on what sort of head you have" and "on what sort of Father you have found," and also "reflect on what inheritance precisely is being promised you. . . . The Father will himself be our inheritance." *Serm.* 146.1 (PL 38 796; Hill, 4:445): *cogitate quale caput habeatis . . . cogitate qualem Patrem inveneritis . . . cogitate quae vobis haereditas promittatur. . . . ipse Pater erit haereditas nostra.*

With this principle as his compass, Augustine addresses a number of topics throughout

the week, each one emphasizing the proper relationship between Christ and the members of the

Church. He teaches that Christ's resurrection defines the Christian faith.[60] Christ is himself the

Church's reward and also the one who sustains her until the end of time.[61] Naturally, then, the

sustenance of the Church is predicated on her participation in Christ's resurrected life even

now.[62] This participation, moreover, is only made possible by Christ's assumption of human

nature, something that must be properly understood in relation to his divine nature.[63] However,

while the Church's present participation in the resurrected life means that she and all her

members are blessed, it does not mean that her reward is realized here and now; rather, the

Church's reward is the fullness of the Son himself, and so she keeps focused on the future bodily

resurrection of her members.[64] Because of this close relationship between the Head and body,

one should find the witness of the Head in the faith of the body, for it is precisely through the

faith of the members that they are united with Christ even as they await the fulfilment of their

union.[65] But, not all those within the Church walls exercise such faith and, since salvation is

based on faith and not sight, it is important to recognize that the Church body here on earth is a

mixture of the saved and the unsaved.[66] The evidence of one's own salvation should, therefore,

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[60] *Serm.* 229H.3; *serm.* 232; *serm.* 234; *serm.* 243.

[61] *Serm.* 229E.4. This sustenance comes primarily through participation in the sacraments, for it is only by partaking of the bread, Augustine reminds his audience, that we recognize who the Lord is. See *Serm.* 235; *serm.* 239.2

[62] *Serm.* 231.

[63] *Serm.* 229G; *serm.* 237.

[64] *Serm.* 229J; *serm.* 247; *serm.* 233; *serm.* 229F.3; *serm.* 254; *serm.* 256.

[65] *Serm.* 229I; *serm.* 229K; *serm.* 229L.

[66] *Serm.* 236A; *serm.* 244; *serm.* 245; *serm.* 246; *serm.* 229M; *serm.* 229N; *serm.* 229O; *serm.* 229P; *serm.* 248; *serm.* 249; *serm.* 250; *serm.* 251; *serm.* 252; *serm.* 252A.

only be found in how one acts toward others, for how we treat others is how we treat Christ.[67] Augustine skilfully weaves together this collection of themes throughout the week, all of which expound on the neophytes' new identity as members of the body and bride of Christ.

The third phase, then, can be fairly said to be devoted to teaching the neophytes on a more theological and doctrinal level about who they are through their continued participation in the liturgical life of the Church. They are those, Augustine will say, who have been healed by Christ through baptism and have now become sheep, guided by Christ and his Church.[68] These sermons take on a broader scope than those belonging to the first two phases. In those phases Augustine spoke about their inclusion in the specific and central liturgical rites; here he takes a step back and provides a number of discussions surrounding what this means. Having become full participants in the liturgical life of the Church, the neophytes must learn to take on the Church's identity. The sermons during the Easter week, then, serve to strengthen the neophytes' understanding of how to interpret their new identity.

Phase 4: Octave Sunday

The week would conclude on the Sunday following Easter, what Augustine called the "sacrament of the Octave" (*sacramentum octauarum*), at which point the neophytes would take off their white robes and join the rest of the congregation.[69] This marked the culmination of the neophytes' initiation. Just like on Easter Sunday, Augustine would deliver at least one sermon to the general assembly and another sermon which specifically addressed the neophytes' integration

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[67] *Serm.* 230; *serm.* 236.

[68] *Serm.* 229E.3; *serm.* 146.1; *serm.* 229P.2-4.

[69] *Serm.* 260; *serm.* 260A.

into the body of faithful believers. Two sermons can be reasonably placed on the Easter Octave, in the Sunday morning Mass.[70] In them, Augustine looks back on the week that has just passed and explains that it has been a week of initiation in which the neophytes have taken on a new identity by being united to Christ through baptism. It is, Augustine goes on, only by staying united to him that the neophytes will remain who they have become by God's grace.[71] This is symbolically represented in the Octave Sunday itself. The neophytes have been built up in their new identity throughout the past week and now the Octave Sunday symbolizes the eternal day of salvation which the Church participates in by way of her union with Christ.[72] Their initiation over the past eight days is, then, their initiation into the present life of the Church.

An additional ten sermons can be placed later on the Octave Sunday when the neophytes would remove their white robes that they had been wearing all week and would mix in with the rest of the faithful.[73] In these sermons, Augustine speaks to the neophytes as those who should now know what their new identity means. In *serm.* 260, he explains, "You that have been baptized, and today complete the sacramental ritual of your octave, must understand, to put it in a nutshell, that the significance of the circumcision of the flesh has been transferred to the circumcision of the heart."[74] Therefore, he explains, "You are called *infantes*, because you have been born again, and have entered upon a new life, and have been born again to eternal life,

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[70] *Serm.* 258; *serm*. 259.

[71] *Serm.* 258.

[72] *Serm.* 259.

[73] *Serm.* 223; *serm.* 224; *serm.* 260; *serm.* 353; *serm.* 376; *serm.* 260A; *serm.* 260D; *serm.* 260B; *serm.* 255A; *serm.* 260C. The congregation was present for these sermons, but Augustine is clearly addressing the neophytes in particular.

[74] *Serm.* 260 (PL 38 1201; Hill, 7:183): *Vos qui baptizati estis, et hodie completis sacramentum octavarum vestrarum, breviter accipite et intelligite translatam fuisse figuram circumcisionis carnis, ad circumcisionem cordis.*

provided you don't stifle what has been reborn in you by leading bad lives."[75] It was, he says

elsewhere, the day on which "there is completed in you the seal of faith."[76] In these sermons, he

was, in effect, sending them off to mix among the faithful. The consistent thrust of his message is

for them to remember who they now are; despite the many Catholics who live lives that are

contrary to what their identity should be, Augustine pleads with the neophytes not to follow such

a lead. In *serm.* 224, for example, he says, "I beg you, by the name that has been invoked over

you, by that altar which you have approached, by the sacraments you have received, by the

judgement that is to come of the living and the dead; I beg you, I bind you by the name of Christ,

not to imitate those you know to be such [bad Catholics], but to ensure that the sacrament abides

in you."[77]

To make his point further, Augustine often picks up on the theme of light which he

initially began with at the vigil. In *serm.* 223, for example, he begins by referencing Gen. 1:4-5,

where God separates the darkness from light.[78] The Church in the present time contains both

those who belong to darkness and those who belong to light; Augustine exhorts the newly

baptised not to betray their identity by living as those who are darkness—the darkness they have

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[75] *Serm.* 260 (PL 1201; Hill 7:183): *Infantes appellamini, quoniam regenerati estis, et novam vitam ingressi estis, et ad vitam aeternam renati estis, si hoc quod in vobis renatum est, male vivendo non suffocetis.*

[76] *Serm.* 260A.4 (MA 1 38; Hill, 7:188): *hodie completur in uobis signaculum fidei.*

[77] *Serm.* 224.3 (PL 38 1149; Hill, 6:233): *obsecro vos per nomen quod super vos invocatum est, per illud altare ad quod accessistis. per Sacramenta quae accepistis, per judicium futurum vivorum et mortuorum; obsecro vos, obstringo vos per nomen Christi, ut non imitemini eos quos tales esse cognoscitis; sed illius sacramentum maneat in vobis.*

[78] *Serm.* 223.1. The Maurists locate this sermon at the Easter Vigil. But this runs counter to the standard scholarly consensus, which places it on the Sunday after Easter. One of the main reasons in favour of the latter is the emphasis in the entire sermon on the Church as a mixed body and thus the importance of imitating the good Catholics and not the bad Catholics. This reads like something we would typically find in a sermon preached as the neophytes were about to shed their white robes and mingle with the rest of the congregation.

just been separated from—but rather that they are to live as the light they have just become.[79]

The key to their continual identity formation is their continued participation in the liturgical life

of the Church:

> You won't show yourselves ungrateful for these immense benefits received from her [the Church], if you show her the proper consideration of your presence. Nor can any of you hope to have God as a gracious Father, if you neglect the Church as your mother. So this holy a spiritual mother daily prepares a spiritual meal for you, with which to nourish not your bodies but your souls. She lavishes on you bread from heaven (Ps. 105:40), she gives you the cup of salvation (Ps. 116:13) to drink. She doesn't want any of her children to be spiritually starved.[80]

It is by their continual participation in the liturgical life of the Church that the neophytes

maintain their new identity.

Conclusion

In Augustine's sermons to the neophytes, he progressively guides his audience through four

phases of initiation into their new liturgical context. He begins in the first phase by establishing

that, by their entrance into the liturgical life of the Church through baptism, the neophytes must

no longer self-identify as the same people they were previously. In the second phase, he begins

to reconstruct their identity as that which is bound up with the liturgical life of the Church by

telling them that they themselves are the body and blood of the Eucharist. Then, in the third

phase, Augustine expounds further on this same theme by offering a number of sermons on what

it means to be a member of Christ's body here on earth. Finally, in the fourth phase, he

concludes by adjusting their gaze to the future and sending them off to be counted among the

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[79] *Serm.* 223.2.

[80] *Serm.* 255A.2 (MA 1 332-333; Hill, 7:163): *his tantis eius beneficiis non eritis ingrati, si ei dignum obsequium uestrae praesentiae exhibueritis. neque poterit quispiam propitium habere deum patrem, qui ecclesiam contempserit matrem. haec ergo sancta et spiritalis mater cotidie uobis spiritales escas praeparat, per quas non corpora sed animas uestras reficiat. panem uobis caelestem largitur, calicem uobis salutarem propinat: non uult quemquam filiorum suorum tali fame laborare.*

faithful. Augustine, therefore, goes to great lengths to instill in the neophytes the proper understanding of their new identity as being tied to their new liturgical context. This is the first part of the argument he is mounting for what the Christian life should look like. Who one is and how one lives must be in continuity; therefore, establishing who they are is of paramount importance. When he then uses Scripture to construct a future-oriented *narratio*, this foundation is firmly in the background.

The Future-Oriented *Narratio*

The second part of Augustine's strategy is to construct a future-oriented *narratio* that he can claim is in line with the neophytes' new identity. Just as an orator would use an imagined *narratio* to orient his audience toward the future and thereby make a case for how they ought to live in the present, so also Augustine makes highly selective and targeted use of Scripture in these sermons in order to encourage the neophytes to envision themselves within the divine *narratio* and so fuse their identity with the telos of the Church. Once again we find Augustine relying on the same three key biblical episodes—creation, the flood, and the exodus—to make his point as he did when speaking to the catechumens. This provides a useful way to chart the significantly different ways he uses Scripture in these sermons compared to how he used it when teaching the catechumens. Here we find him teaching the neophytes that how they self-identify in the present must be determined from their place within the future-oriented *narratio* of Scripture.

A New Perspective on Scripture

Throughout each phase of the Easter week, Augustine is eager to impress on the neophytes that

they have a new relationship to Scripture. This means, he tells them, they must change their

perspective on Scripture. Preaching at the end of the vigil, shortly after the neophytes have been

baptised, he tells them that they must now "get rid of the excess baggage of materialist thinking"

when listening to and thinking about Scripture and instead must learn to "think about invisible

realities [depicted in Scripture] in an invisible way." He advises: "Do not parade bodily

likenesses before the eyes of your minds."[81] To know who they are as new Christians, he

teaches, they must come to know God by rising beyond the transient world of materiality and

apprehend that which is eternal and immaterial.[82]

But how are they to do this? Augustine teaches them that Scripture plays a pivotal role as

both the model and means of this process. To explain how this is so, he turns to Exodus 3:14-15

and explains that, though God is beyond human grasp, he reveals himself in the temporal

language of Scripture in a way that is faithful to who he is in eternity. This is the means by which

human beings are able to know God. It is as if, Augustine says, God knew we could never grasp

who he is in himself, so he provided a way for us to mount up to the knowledge of him despite

our temporal condition.[83] The knowledge of God, Augustine is teaching, comes through God's

work in time, as recorded by the *narratio* of Scripture. Therefore, it is understanding the divine

narratio and their relation to it that Augustine is ultimately eager to draw out in these sermons.

In fact, this is a theme he reinforces throughout the Easter week. During the Eucharistic

catechesis on Easter Sunday he states: "Anybody who wishes to make progress [in the faith] has

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[81] *Serm.* 223A.3 (MA 1 13; Hill, 6:206): *impedimenta, fratres, carnalis cogitationis auferte: inuisibilia inuisibiliter cogitate: non uobis uersentur ante oculos mentis similitudines corporis.*

[82] *Serm.* 223A.3.

[83] *Serm.* 223A.5.

the means of doing so," if only they "concentrate on the scriptures."[84] Through ordinary

language, he says, Scripture conveys who God is by drawing its readers into itself and thus

beyond the world of transient images. Therefore, during Easter week he teaches the neophytes

that they must learn how Scripture speaks "in mysteries and sacraments" (*in mysteriis et*

sacramentis), so that "those who ask may receive, those who seek may find, and those who

knock may have the door opened to them."[85] Finally, on Octave Sunday he teaches them that

continual reception to "the showers of God's word" (*imbres uerborum Dei*) will bring about a

harvest of spiritual growth in their lives.[86] There is a clear sense, then, that Augustine is guiding

the neophytes throughout the week in how they are to understand and relate to Scripture in a new

way.

Conveying a new dimension of Scripture's character to the neophytes is clearly of central

importance for Augustine. We should expect, then, to find that his use of Scripture in these

sermons illustrates further how they are to read Scripture as new members of the Church. Instead

of using a wide variety of Old Testament passages, as Ambrose does, Augustine's narrower

selection of Old Testament passages reveal a targeted use of Scripture. He only expands on three

Old Testament accounts in any significant way: creation, the flood, and the exodus. By focusing

on these three important episodes, Augustine is able to illustrate to the neophytes how their shift

of perspective includes them into the *narratio* of Scripture and thereby shapes how they self-

identify in the present.

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[84] *Serm.* 227 (SC 116 236, 238; Hill, 6:242): *qui uult proficere, habet unde. intenti estote ad scripturas.* Cf. *Serm.* 229.1-2. On the Eucharistic theology reflected in *serm.* 227, see Michael Albaric, "A Eucharistic Catechesis" in *Augustine and the Bible*, Pamela Bright, ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 269-281.

[85] *Serm.* 252.1 (PL 38 1171; Hill, 7:130).

[86] *Serm.* 223.2 (PL 38 1092; Hill, 6:203).

Creation

 Of the three episodes which Augustine expounds on in these sermons, the most often recurring is the creation account. He offers an extended commentary on it in 3 of his sermons to the neophytes, but he alludes to it numerous other times during the Octave week as well.[87] However, what is particularly noteworthy is not his predilection for discussing the creation story, but rather *how* he discusses it in these sermons. He shows an acute concern to anchor the neophytes' self-identity in the creation narrative by impressing on them that they are active participants in it.

A number of times Augustine refers to the neophytes as the "day" that God creates from darkness. This connection is based on a series of well thought out exegetical maneuvers, which he explains in *serm*. 226. There he remarks that his application of the word "day" to the neophytes is based on its use in Psalm 118(119):24, which reads: "This is the day that the Lord has made; let us exult and be joyful in it." Augustine begins the explanation of his exegesis by asking how the word "day" is to be interpreted in this verse. He observes that Scripture uses the word "day" in three distinct senses and that there are, therefore, three possible meanings for the word "day" in this verse. In the first place, it can be taken to speak of the eternal Word, who Scripture calls the light of the world (Jn. 8:12). We know from the creation account that "day" is God's name for "light" and so the Word could very rightly be the "day" spoken of in this psalm. But, Augustine goes on, if one considers all that is said in psalm 118(119): 24, this meaning is immediately ruled out. While it is true that the Word can rightfully be referred to as "day," he cannot be called the "day *that the Lord has made*," for he is begotten and not made.[88] Thus, having ruled out the first possible meaning, Augustine moves on to the second possible meaning

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[87] *Serm.* 223; *serm.* 226; *serm.* 258.

[88] *Serm.* 226.

for the word "day" found in Scripture. He observes that the "day" of this psalm could refer to the literal first day of creation, where God divided light from darkness (Gen. 1:2-5). However, Augustine looks to the rest of the verse again and rules out this reading as well, since it cannot be true, he reasons, that the first day of creation is the one and only day in which we should exult and be joyful.[89] This does not accord with the message in the rest of Scripture and so suggests a different reading is required. Finally, then, Augustine comes to the third and most plausible meaning of "day" in this psalm passage. For this third meaning he turns to Matthew 5:14, where Christians are called "the light of the world."[90] Recalling once again that "day" is God's name for "light," Augustine explains that believers can be properly called "day." Reading the psalm with this meaning in mind is far more convincing than the previous two meanings, Augustine says, since the gift of faith which makes one a new creature is surely that which we ought to take joy in. Therefore, he concludes that the meaning of the "day" which was "made," and in which we ought to "exult and be joyful" is properly taken to be the members of the Church who have been created anew through baptism.[91]

Having provided the exegetical justification for identifying the neophytes as "day," Augustine proceeds to build further on what this means for the way they understand themselves

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[89] *Serm.* 226.

[90] Elsewhere Augustine makes the same point appealing to the Pauline epistles instead of the Matthean text. In *serm.* 223, he says: "In the book called *Genesis* scripture says, *And God saw the light that it was good. And God divided between the light and the darkness; and God called the light day, and the darkness he called night* (Gn 1:4-5). So if God called the light day, then without a shadow of doubt those to whom the apostle Paul says, *You were once darkness, but now light in the Lord* (Eph 5:8), were day; since the one who *commanded light to shine out of the darkness* (2 Cor 4:6) had enlightened them." *Serm.* 223.1. Note that the Maurists list this sermon as being preached at the Easter vigil, before the candidates were baptised. But it cannot be so, since Augustine refers to the *infantes* who are clothed in white robes (223.1). Clearly, then, this sermon was preached after they were baptised. Furthermore, the amount of time Augustine dedicates to instructing the *infantes* to be careful about mixing with those in the Church who are bad examples suggests that he was preaching on the Octave Sunday, when the *infantes* would shed their white robes and mix with the rest of the faithful.

[91] *Serm.* 226.

and Scripture by applying this meaning of "day" back into the creation account. In other words, his exegesis of Psalm 118(119):24 is the justification for placing the neophytes into the creation story through a figurative reading. If they can rightly self-identify as "day" in this psalm passage, then they should self-identify with Scripture's use of "day" in other passages as well. Therefore, after he justifies his exegesis, he recites the creation story and places the neophytes directly into the context of the story, saying: "Yesterday here too the Spirit of God was skimming over the water, and darkness was upon the deep, when these *infantes* were still carrying their sins. So when their sins were forgiven them through the Spirit of God, that's when God said, *Let light be made; and light was made*. There they are, *the day which the Lord has made; let us exult and be joyful in it*."[92]

Augustine's exegetical strategy is not primarily to draw out the significance of baptism by finding figures in Scripture, but rather to draw out the significance of the liturgical context of baptism with the *narratio* of Scripture by way of comparison. Therefore, he only draws on the parallel between creation and baptism to bolster his main point. By transposing his reading of the word "day" from the Psalm passage back into the creation account, Augustine has, in effect, transposed the newly baptised believers themselves into the creation narrative as well. These new Christians now find a clear reference to themselves in the "day" that God created by separating light from darkness. In this way, the narrative becomes a framework in which they can understand their new identity. This means that everything said about the first "day" in creation

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[92] *Serm*. 226 (PL 38 1099; Hill, 6:240): *Ferebatur ergo etiam hic hesterno die Dei Spiritus super aquam, et tenebrae erant super abyssum, quando isti Infantes adhuc sua peccata portabant. Quando ergo illis per Spiritum Dei peccata dimissa sunt, tunc dixit Deus, Fiat lux; et facta est lux. Ecce dies quem fecit Dominus, exsultemus et jucundemur in eo.* Cf. *serm*. 258.2 (Hill, 7:173), where Augustine says: "Think of the darkness of these ones here [the newly baptized], before they came to the forgiveness of sins. See there was darkness over the deep, before those sins had been forgiven. But the Spirit of God was being wafted over the waters; these ones here went down into the water, the Spirit of God was borne over the waters, the darkness of their sins was driven away: *this is the day which the Lord has made*."

can be said of the newly baptised as well. Specifically, that God, by his Spirit, has separated them from the darkness of sin and has called them "good." Their baptismal experience is to be understood as a divine creative act, in which they have been separated from the darkness of sin, just as God separated light from darkness at the creation of the world. They have learned that through baptism, they have become the light of the world.[93] The experience of baptism is clearly paralleled with creation in this passage, but it is done so to elaborate on the context in which the neophytes should interpret their placement in the creation account.

In effect, he is encouraging them to imagine themselves in the *narratio* of Scripture in order to orient them toward the future and so better understand who they are in the present. By identifying the neophytes as "day," Augustine has opened a way to read them as active participants in the creation story. To be sure, the whole "day" he is speaking of applies to the head (Christ) and the body (the Church) together, but his attention continually comes back to the neophytes because they are the ones who need to be *convinced* of this.[94] The newly baptized are those who "were once in darkness, when the night of their sins was covering them. But now that they have been washed clean in the bath of amnesty, that they have been watered from the fountain of wisdom, that they have been bedewed with the light of justice, *this is the day which the Lord has made; let us exult and rejoice in it*."[95] By including them in the creation story, Augustine grounds the neophytes' present experience in the divine *narratio* which always looks to the future. Who they are in the present becomes bound up with how they will live going forward.

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[93] *Serm*. 223.1.

[94] *Serm.* 258.1.

[95] *Serm*. 223.1 (PL 38 1092; Hill, 6:201): *cum peccatorum suorum nocte premerentur, tenebrae fuerunt. nunc autem quia mundati sunt lauacro indulgentiae, quia irrigati fonte sapientiae, quia perfusi luce justitiae: hic est dies quem fecit dominus, exsultemus et laetemur in eo.*

The logic of *serm.* 223 stands as a good example of how Augustine relies on the deliberative genre. He begins by placing the neophytes into the creation narrative as "day," and then immediately goes on to make the case that, based on their new identity which they have learned about through their participation in the liturgy and through the exegesis of Scripture, they should seek out good Catholics to imitate: "So listen to me, O you freshly born children of a chaste mother; or rather, listen to me, you children of a virgin mother. Because *you were once in darkness, but now light in the Lord*, stick close to the children of light; and let me put it quite plainly: stick close to those of the faithful who are good."[96] Or again in *serm.* 260D, he tells them that they are "day," but then exhorts them, saying that upon their mixture with the rest of the congregation they become part of the faithful: "You are called the faithful; live faithfully. Keep faith to your Lord in your hearts and your behavior. Don't go mingling with bad behavior and morals in the crush of bad Christians."[97]

Flood

In one sermon preached on the Octave Sunday, Augustine uses the episode of the flood in a similar way.[98] In this sermon, Augustine sets out to "remind" the neophytes what the baptism which they have just participated in means, and to offer an "explanation" (*ratio*) of such a "great

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[96] *Serm.* 223.1 (PL 38 1092; Hill, 6:201): *audite ergo nos, o nouelli filii castae matris: imo audite nos, filii uirginis matris. quoniam fuistis aliquando tenebrae, nunc autem lux in domino: ut filii lucis ambulate, filiis lucis adhaerete; atque ut hoc ipsum planius dicam, bonis fidelibus adhaerete.*

[97] *Serm.* 260D.2 (MA 1 500; Hill, 7:201): *fideles uocamini, fideliter uiuite: domino uestro in corde et moribus uestris fidem seruate. nolite uos commiscere moribus malis in turba christianorum malorum.*

[98] This sermon dates to quite early in Augustine's priestly ministry and so bears a closer resemblance in many ways to the kind of sermon on baptism he would have heard in Milan. However, even at this early date his unique strategy is detectible in his use of the scriptural text.

mystery" (*tanti mysterii*).[99] He begins by pointing out that there is a general similitude between the flood and baptism, for in both sin is washed away by water. In the flood, the earth was "purged of all manner of iniquity," and in baptism, "all human sins are abolished."[100] Furthermore, he observes, a number of other similarities can also be found—between the ark and the Church, for example, since the ark was constructed of "timbers that could never rot" (*lignis imputribilibus*).[101] It could be rightfully said, therefore, that baptism is prefigured by the flood.

However, the figurative parallels between the flood and baptism are not Augustine's main concern. They simply serve as introductory and supporting evidence for that which really interests him about the flood account—namely, its use as a narrative into which the neophytes can be included. That is why Augustine is keen to make a connection that will enable him to find the neophytes themselves within the flood account. To do this, he relies on the number 8. There were eight people in the ark, just as the celebration of the neophytes' new birth lasts through the eighth day of the Easter Octave. Therefore, while eight people passed through the flood in which sins were "extinguished" (*restincta*), so also the same mystery is signified in baptism, through which sins are "abolished" (*delentur*), by the number of eight days.[102] At first, this *similitudo* seems rather forced when compared to those he lists earlier. But it is important that Augustine maintain its legitimacy for his overall point. Therefore, he takes pains to explain its justification, saying:

> You see, facts which signify something can be compared to the sounds that come from
> our mouths; so just as one and the same thing can be said in a whole range of words and

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[99] *Serm.* 260C.2 (MA 1 334; Hill, 7:193).

[100] *Serm.* 260C.2 (MA 1 334; Hill, 7:193): *ab iniquitatibus quondam diluuio terram esse purgatam . . . per aquam cuncta hominis peccata delentur.* Note that Augustine draws out this parallel twice in this same paragraph.

[101] *Serm.* 260C.2 (MA 1 334; Hill, 7:193).

[102] *Serm*. 260C.2 (MA 1 334; Hill, 7:193).

languages, in exactly the same way one and the same thing is customarily signified, without any change of meaning, not only by words, but also by many and variable symbolic or figurative facts. That's why it does not mean, just because there we have eight persons and here eight days, that two different things are being stated; no, it's the same thing in two different ways, with a variety of signs, comparable to a diversity of letters.[103]

The differences between the accounts is not enough to discount the similitude, Augustine is saying. His initial comments about the flood's prefiguration of baptism provide the basis for the claim he is making here. Having established the *similitudo* between the flood and baptism already, he can make the argument that the *similitudo* based on the number 8 is valid as well.

The reason why maintaining the connection based on the number 8 is so important for Augustine's strategy is that it is the link between the neophytes themselves and the flood account. The other figurative links Augustine mentions at the beginning of his sermon are between the flood and baptism. But, for Augustine, the importance of making the link between the neophytes and the eight people in the ark is that it paves the way for him to incorporate the neophytes into the story itself and so include them into the larger divine *narratio* playing out in time. Again, the future-orientation of the divine *narratio* comes to the fore as the true significance of the number 8. He explains this, saying:

> [W]hat is prefigured by the number eight is everything that belongs to the age to come, where nothing either advances or falls away with the unrolling of times and seasons, but everything persists continuously in a steady state of blessedness. And since the times of this age slip by with the repetition, round and round, of the number of seven days, it's only right that that should be called the eighth which the saints will reach after their labours in time, and which they don't any longer divide up into periods of activity and rest, distinguished by the alternations of daylight and night. Instead, theirs is a perpetually wakeful rest, and an activity that is a tireless, not an idle, leisure.[104]

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[103] *Serm.* 260C.2 (MA 1 335; Hill, 7:193): *facta enim aliquid significantia sonis oris nostri comparantur: sicut ergo una eadem que res multiplicibus uerbis et linguis uarie dici potest, ita una eadem que res non tantum uocibus sed et figuratis factis multis et uariis sine ulla supermutatione significari solet. quam ob rem non, quia ibi octo sunt homines, hic autem octo dies, aliud atque aliud, sed id ipsum aliter atque aliter, dissimilitudine signorum, quasi litterarum diuersitate, nunciatur.*

[104] *Serm.* 260C.3 (MA 1 335; Hill, 7:193): *octonario itaque numero praefigurantur quae ad futurum saeculum pertinent, ubi nullo uolumine temporum seu deficit seu proficit aliquid, sed stabili beatitudine iugiter perseuerat. et*

By the end of the sermon, the true significance of the flood narrative is now found to be future-oriented, in its prefiguration of the eternal day. What is signified by the eighth day, Augustine teaches, is that eternal day which is "always today" (*semper hodiernus*), in which the members of Christ's body will "transcend all times" (*transcendere omnia tempora*) and participate in that eternal rest, which is to "rest in the Lord" (*requiescere in domino*).[105] By including the neophytes in the flood narrative, through the connection of the number 8, Augustine draws a direct connection between the neophytes' present liturgical context and the *narratio* of Scripture. Who the neophytes self-identify as in their present context is drawn from envisioning their role in the flood account.

Again, their inclusion into the flood narrative serves Augustine's goal of exhorting them to live morally upright lives. For example, in *serm.* 260C, after he uses the flood account to impress on the neophytes their new identity he immediately shifts their focus toward the future, saying, "But when, in today's solemn ceremony, you move out of this chancel, where in your spiritual infancy you were being set apart from the others, and are mixed in with God's people, stick to what is good; and remember, bad behavior perverts good character. . . . Do not falter on the narrow road, whose end is the wide open spaces of eternity."[106] Understanding who they have become through entrance into the Church means viewing their new identity in light of the

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quoniam istius saeculi tempora septenario numero dierum per circuitum repetito dilabuntur, recte ille tamquam octauus dicitur dies, quo post labores temporales cum peruenerint sancti, nulla uicissitudine lucis et noctis actionem requiem ue distingunt; sed eis erit perpetuo uigilans quies, et actio non segniter sed infatigabiliter otiosa.

[105] *Serm*. 260C.4 (MA 1 336; Hill, 7:194).

[106] *Serm.* 260C.7 (MA 1 338-339; Hill, 7:196-97): *cum autem, quod hodierno die sollemniter geritur, ex istis cancellis, quibus uos a ceteris distinguebat spiritalis infantia, populo permixti fueritis, bonis inhaerete; et mementote quia peruertunt mores bonos colloquia praua. . . . nolite deficere in angusta uia, cuius finis est aeterna latitudo.*

future reward they will one day enjoy. Augustine makes use of the account of the flood as the

interpretive lens through which the neophytes are able to appreciate that.

Exodus

Finally, the third important narrative sequence that Augustine relies on in his sermons to the

neophytes is the exodus narrative. Augustine's use of the exodus narrative is the clearest and

most straightforward of the three narrative sequences in these sermons. He offers an extended

commentary on the exodus in two sermons preached specifically to the neophytes on the Octave

Sunday.[107] In a sermon preached around 405, Augustine instructs the newly baptized, the "fresh

buds of holiness" (*nouella germina sanctitatis*), regarding how they ought to understand their

new Christian identity, saying: "You must think of yourselves as brought out of Egypt, freed

from a harsh slavery, in which iniquity was your master."[108] Augustine immediately goes on to

expound on how the neophytes are to interpret the narrative with themselves in it: "As for the

enemies pursuing you from behind, consider them to be your past sins; because just as the

Egyptians perished when the people of God passed through, so were your sins obliterated when

you were baptized."[109] Their baptism has "overthrown the real pharaoh" (*uerum deiecit*

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[107] *Serm.* 260B; *serm.* 260C. Cf. *serm.* 363, which was perhaps preached on Easter Sunday but was clearly addressed to a special group other than the neophytes; *Jo. ev. tr.* 11.4; *en. Ps.* 80.38.

[108] *Serm.* 260B.1 (MA 1 330; Hill, 7:190): *sic uos existimate tamquam ex aegypto liberatos a dura seruitute, in qua uobis dominabatur iniquitas.* It is worth noting that Augustine uses the imagery of crossing the Red Sea for baptism in a sermon he preached to the *competentes*. However in that sermon (*Serm.* 213), he speaks of their inclusion into the *narratio* in the future tense. The imagery is there, but they are not included in it yet. This, it seems to me, is significant, for it reinforces the point that they are not fully included in the narrative until they are baptised.

[109] *Serm.* 260B.1 (MA 1 330; Hill, 7:190): *hostes, qui uos a tergo insequebantur, peccata praeterita deputate: nam, sicut transeunte dei populo aegyptii perierunt, sic uobis baptizatis illa deleta sunt.* Cf. *serm.* 223E.2.

pharaonem) and "destroyed the Egyptians" (*aegyptios interemit*), he tells them in *serm.* 353, so they must fear their old sins no longer.[110]

Augustine realizes that including the neophytes into the exodus account requires further explanation and justification. Therefore, he is careful to justify his exegesis of the Exodus passage, just as he was when discussing creation and the flood. Here he appeals to 1 Corinthians 10:1-11 in defense of his exegesis. In verses 1-4, Augustine points out, Paul offers a similar reading of the exodus narrative as a figurative representation of the Christian life. Then, in verses 5-11, Paul recounts how Israel's lack of faith in God in the wilderness serves as an example (*figura*) for Christians today. The good Christians are the Israelites who obeyed and trusted in God, just as the good Christians in Hippo are those who obey and trust in God. Augustine, therefore, states: "From these words of the apostle you can readily acknowledge that I have suggested these things to your ears and minds, not as my own idea or guesswork, but as taught by holy scripture."[111]

But his reason for including the neophytes into the exodus narrative is not simply to show that the exodus prefigures baptism. Rather, his goal is to orient the neophytes toward the future. By establishing that they should self-identify as Israel in the exodus, he can shift their focus to the future by warning them of the difficult road that lies in front of them: "So now you must make for the heavenly kingdom, to which you have been called, as to the promised land; and while you make your way through this earthly life, as through the desert, watch out for and stand

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[110] *Serm.* 353.2 (PL 39 1562; Hill, 10:154).

[111] *Serm.* 260B.1 (MA 1 331; Hill, 7:190): *his certe apostolicis uerbis euidenter agnoscitis, non ista nos propria coniectura, sed sancta scriptura doctos insinuasse auribus et mentibus uestris.*

up to all kinds of temptation."[112] He goes on, "You receive your manna, after all, from sharing at

the holy altar, and what you drink flows from the rock."[113] Once again, the neophytes are clearly

to understand their new Christian identity by envisioning themselves in the exodus narrative. He

urges the neophytes not to imitate bad Catholics, who are like the Israelites who grumbled

against God, saying, "What use was it, after all, to have escaped from Egypt through the Red

Sea, only to perish from fiery serpents in the desert? That's how it is with people who are

baptized, and set free from their past sins, and then neglect such a wonderful grace, so that they

are waylaid by the poisonous bites of death-dealing seductions, and are unable to reach the

promised life."[114] Instead, they are to imitate the faithful Israelites and good Catholics:

> If in your thirst for the faith of the nations you should encounter some bitterness from
> those who oppose you, like that of the waters which Israel was unable to drink, imitate
> the patience of the Lord, so that those waters may turn sweet by your throwing in, as it
> were, the wood of the cross. If you should be bitten by some temptation creeping up on
> you like a serpent, apply the same cure of the cross, by gazing on that serpent lifted up,
> like death conquered and led in triumph in the flesh of the Lord. If the Amalekite
> adversary should attempt to block and hinder your journey, let him be defeated by your
> doggedly persevering in stretching out your arms in yet another indication of the cross.[115]

The ethical injunction to live lives worthy of Christians plays a decisive role in Augustine's

figurative exegesis here. Furthermore, here we find Augustine making use of the common

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[112] *Serm*. 260B.1 (MA 1 331; Hill, 7:190): *nunc ergo caeleste regnum, quo uocati estis, tamquam terram promissionis inquirite; et per istam terrenam uitam, uelut per heremum iter agentes, temptationibus uigilanter obsistite.*

[113] *Serm*. 260B.1 (MA 1 331; Hill, 7:190): *manna enim uestrum de sancti altaris participatione percipitis, et de petra effluit quod potatis.*

[114] *Serm*. 260B.1 (MA 1 332; Hill, 7:190): *quid enim profuit, per mare rubrum ab aegyptiis euasisse, et in deserto a serpentibus interisse? sic sunt, qui baptizati, et a peccatis praeteritis liberati, tantam neglegunt gratiam, et uenenosis mortiferarum seductionum morsibus intercepti ad uitam non possunt peruenire promissam.*

[115] *Serm*. 353.2 (PL 39 1562; Hill, 10:154): *si uobis fidem gentilium sitientibus amaritudo aliqua resistentium, uelut aquarum illarum quas israel non potuit bibere, occurrerit; imitata domini patientia, uelut iniecto crucis ligno dulcescant. si tentatio serpentina momorderit; conspecta illius exaltatione serpentis, tanquam mortis in carne domini uictae atque triumphatae, eodem crucis medicamento sanetur. si aduersarius amalechita iter intercludere atque impedire conabitur, perseuerantissima extensione brachiorum eiusdem crucis indicio superetur.*

deliberative strategy of comparing two possible outcomes in order to move his audience to action. By including the neophytes into the exodus story, Augustine encourages them to think about who they have become based on what lies ahead for them in the future.

In three of these sermons, he briefly rehearses the logic for his ethical appeal, and we find that it lends further credence to my claim that he follows the logic of the deliberative genre. In *serm.* 224, he reminds them that they have just become "the members of Christ" (*membra christi*).[116] Based on this new identity, he goes on: "So because you are members of Christ, I have some advice and suggestions for you. . . . Turn your backs on the whirlpool of drunkenness. Dread all forms of fornication like death; not the death which releases the soul from the body, but the one in which the soul will burn for ever with the body."[117] And he concludes:

> [Y]ou newly baptised, listen to me; listen to me, you that have been born again through the blood of Christ. I beg you, by the name that has been invoked over you, by that altar which you have approached, by the sacraments you have received, by the judgement that is to come of the living and the dead; I beg you, I bind you by the name of Christ, not to imitate those you know to be such, but to ensure that the sacrament abides in you of the one who did not wish to come down from the cross, but did wish to rise again from the grave.[118]

In *serm.* 255A, he explains that the sacraments in which they have now participated in define their new identity, and they must now live according to this identity: "Live good lives, my most dearly beloved children, so that you may get good results from receiving such a great sacrament. Let vices be corrected, behavior well ordered, virtues cultivated. May each of you be attended

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[116] *Serm.* 224.1 (RB 79 201; Hill, 6:231).

[117] *Serm* 224.1 (RB 79 201; Hill, 6:231): *quia ergo membra christi estis, admoneo uos. . . . gurges ebrietatis repellatur a uobis: fornicationes sic timete quomodo mortem; mortem, non quae animam soluit a corpore, sed ubi anima semper ardebit cum corpore.*

[118] *Serm.* 224.3 (RB 79 204; Hill, 6:233): *uos me audite infantes; uos me audite regenerati per christum. obsecro uos per altare quo accessistis, per sacramenta quae accepistis, per nomen quod super uos inuocatum est, per iudicium futurum uiuorum et mortuorum; obsecro, adiuro et obstringo per nomen christi: non imitemini eos nisi quos fideles tales esse cognoueritis.*

through life by devotion, holiness, chastity, humility, sobriety."[119] Or again in *serm.* 260, he says, "You that have been baptized, and today complete the sacramental ritual of your octave, must understand, to put it briefly, that the significance of the circumcision of the flesh has been transferred to the circumcision of the heart. . . . I hereby give you notice that I am calling God and his angels to witness what I am telling you: keep yourselves chaste, whether in marriage, or in total continence. . . . Beware of fraud in your business dealings. Beware of telling lies and of perjury. Beware of being talkative and extravagant."[120] Finally, in *serm.* 353, he speaks of their new identity as innocent infants, saying, "You must hold on to this harmless innocence in such a way that you don't lose it as you grow up."[121] Clearly, his ethical exhortations are grounded in the future-oriented *narratio* of Scripture, and are designed to expound upon their new liturgical identity.

Conclusion

Augustine's use of these three specific passages reveals a consistent use of Scripture as a future-oriented *narratio*. While acknowledging the prefiguration of baptism in the Old Testament on a number of occasions, this prefiguration is not the main focus of his exegesis *per se*, because he is not primarily interested in explaining the rite itself. He is far more concerned with establishing a way to read the neophytes into the divine *narratio* in order to have them think about their present

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[119] *Serm.* 255A.2 (MA 1 332; Hill, 7:163): *bene uiuite, dilectissimi filii, ut bonas causas de tanto sacramento suscepto habere possitis. corrigantur uitia, componantur mores, suscipiantur uirtutes; assit unicuique uestrum pietas, sanctitas, castitas, humilitas, sobrietas.*

[120] *Serm.* 260 (PL 38 1202; Hill, 7:183): *uos qui baptizati estis, et hodie completis sacramentum octauarum uestrarum, breuiter accipite et intelligite translatam fuisse figuram circumcisionis carnis, ad circumcisionem cordis. . . . uidete, quia testificor uobis coram deo et angelis eius: castitatem seruate, siue coniugalem, siue omnimodae continentiae. . . . cauete a fraudibus in negotiis uestris. cauete a mendaciis et periuriis. cauete a uerbositate et luxuria.*

[121] *Serm.* 353.1 (PL 39 1560; Hill, 10:152): *hanc innocentiam sic tenere debetis, ut eam crescendo non amittatis.*

identity in light of the future. How he does this by appealing to the creation, flood, and exodus accounts is markedly different from the emphases we found him drawing out of these same episodes when speaking to the catechumens. Having been included into the Church through baptism, Augustine's audiene is now also included into the divine *narratio*. This inclusion is the means by which they are to understand their new identity and so also the means by which they come to see how they ought to live.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have made the claim that Augustine's use of Scripture in his sermons to the neophytes is determined by a strategy common in the deliberative genre. Within the framework I am proposing, the two unique features of Augustine's sermons to the neophytes—the ethical injunctions and the tenor of his exegesis—are both explained as functions of a strategy borrowed from the deliberative genre. While it would be too far to suggest that these sermons conform completely to the pattern of a deliberative oration, there are enough similarities to posit Augustine's modification of the deliberative strategy of *comparatio* in order to impress on the audience how they ought to live as Catholics. The present context is the liturgical life of the Church, which the neophytes are initiated into during the Octave week, and the future *narratio* is their envisioned participation in the creation, flood, and exodus accounts. By comparing the present with the envisioned future, Augustine demonstrates the continuity between the liturgical context and the *narratio* of Scripture, and thereby constructs his case for the neophytes to live ethical lives.[122]

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[122] Harmless rightfully notes that in these sermons, "the sweep and swirl of time came to the fore," in which Augustine finds a "convergence of past and future, of history and eternity." But ultimately, for Harmless, Augustine's teaching on the mysteries in which the newly baptised had just participated in was eschatological, which required "situating things—life and liturgy, salvation history and the history of one's heart—against that final

Augustine's broad strategy for applying Scripture to his congregation is now starting to come into focus. In particular, the importance of *narratio* for his strategy as the means of applying different levels of Scripture to different audiences is beginning to take shape. Just as he relied on the role of *narratio* in a judicial oration to communicate to the catechumens, in a similar way he relies on another common use of *narratio*, this time from the deliberative genre, in his sermons to the neophytes. In both cases, the notion of *narratio* is key for how he uses Scripture, but how he makes use of it is very different. When speaking to the catechumens he sought to convince them of the Church's character; in his sermons to the neophytes, his goal is to impress on them that this is now their character as well. By being caught up in the divine *narratio*, which is recorded in Scripture, playing out in history, and leading to its eschatological fulfilment, the neophytes' new identity is determined in light of their end goal or telos. This, in turn, has direct bearing on how they ought to understand themselves and live in the present.[123] This explains the shift, or development, in how the neophytes read Scripture. As catechumens, creation, the flood, and the exodus were strung together into a narrative of the Church; now, as neophytes who have just entered the Church, they have become the subject of these same episodes. In this way, Scripture is growing along with the spiritual progression of Augustine's audience.

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horizon. . . . He wanted the neophytes, the assembly, and himself to keep eyes fixed on that eighth day and order their pilgrimage accordingly." Harmless, *Augustine*, 337-39.

[123] Indeed, Augustine says in a sermon to the faithful that their self-knowledge as the Church is precisely what distinguishes them from those outside the Catholic Church (e.g. the Donatists). *Serm.* 46.37.

5
GUIDING THE ASCENT OF THE FAITHFUL

In the previous two chapters, I charted how Augustine makes use of Scripture on two different levels by drawing on two different functions the notion of *narratio* served. On the first of these levels, when speaking to the catechumens, he uses Scripture as a *narratio* in its descriptive sense, just as it would normally function in a judicial oration. On the second level, when preaching to the neophytes, he makes use of Scripture as a *narratio* in its prescriptive and proscriptive senses, as it would be employed in a deliberative oration. In the present chapter, I will consider the third level at which Augustine uses Scripture in his sermons when speaking to the "faithful" (*fidelis*).[1] Though the vast majority of Augustine's sermons that have come down to us today were preached to this group of faithful believers, rarely are these sermons treated as a unique body of work, with its own challenges and distinct strategy. However, I argue that there is a notable strategy at work in these sermons, which reveals the third stage in the larger pattern I have been tracing in this study. I contend that Augustine continues to use *narratio* as the channel by which he mediates Scripture to the faithful, but that he draws specifically on the dialectical quality of *narratio* in order to guide the faithful along into spiritual maturity through the process of figurative interpretation. On this level, it is not the function of *narratio* in a particular genre that explains his strategy, but rather, it is some of the fundamental attributes of *narratio* that cut across all genres which he draws on and modifies to serve his purposes.

It is important to note at the outset that dialectic, in its technical sense, refers to the height of philosophy, as the science by which one advanced from considering particulars to the

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[1] See *serm.* 260D.2 (MA 1 499). Cf. *serm.* 90.1.

contemplation of universals.[2] However, as an art that was learned in a philosophical education, it

not something Augustine would have formally been exposed to in his grammatical and rhetorical

training. Therefore, we should not expect him to use it in its pure, philosophical sense. Instead,

what I claim is that we find dialectical principles present within rhetoric in general, and *narratio*

in particular, which Augustine exploits on the basis of his later exposure to philosophy.[3] The

kind of dialectic we find in Augustine's sermons, then, is a modified version of the philosophical

art.

I will make my case by way of four main steps. First, I begin by outlining the most salient

feature of his strategy in these sermons—their dialogical tone—and I contend that this feature is

deliberate and serves his end goal of exercising the soul. Next, I turn to the question of whether

the dialectical strategy this reveals is consistent with the picture of *narratio* and of Augustine's

view of Scripture that I have painted in the previous chapters. By looking at the inherent

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[2] In late antiquity, dialectic actually had two applications. It was at the same time considered one of the important disciplines taught in secondary schools and also the height of philosophical science. Therefore, it refers to both the science of parsing terms to discern meaning and the search for intelligibility by leading the mind from the particular to the universal. For this definition, see Edward G. Ballard, "Saint Augustine's Christian Dialectic" in *Philosophy and the Liberal Arts* (Dordrecht, NLD: Kluwer Academic, 1989), 113. See also, Michelle Malatesta, "Dialectic," in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Alan Fitzgerald and John Cavadini (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 269. Augustine himself defines dialectic as both "the science of disputing well" (*dialectica est bene disputandi scientia*) in *dial.* 1.5, and also as the "discipline of disciplines" (*disciplina disciplinarum*) in *ord.* 2.13.38. See also *c. acad.* 3.13.29, where he says that dialectic is *ipsa scientia ueritatis*. The best study of dialectic in Augustine is still Jean Pépin, *Saint Augustin et la dialectique* (Villanova: Villanova University Press, 1976), in which Pépin argues that Augustine had two positions on dialectic: early in his life, up to at least the year 400, his positive attitude toward dialectical theology is found; but in the last period of Augustine's life, especially in dispute with Julian, a sharp critique of dialectic is present. For arguments that Augustine's later critique is not levelled against dialectic itself, but rather against the incorrect use of it, see Joseph T. Leinhard, "Augustine on Dialectic: Defender and Defensive" *SP* 33 (1997): 162-166; and Giovanni Catapano, "Augustine, Julian, and Dialectic: A Reconsideration of J. Pépin's Lecture" *AugStud* 41 (2010): 241-253. On the possibility of Augustine's developing use of dialectic, see S. Heβbrüggen-Walter, "Augustine's Critique of Dialectic: Between Ambrose and the Arians," in *Augustine and the Disciples: From Cassiciacum to Confessions*, ed. K. Pollmann and M. Vessey (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 184-205.

[3] As I will discuss below, the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy, and especially dialectic, was a close one. In the very first line of his *Rhet.*, Aristotle states that rhetoric is the "counterpart" (ἀντίστροφος) of philosophy. *Rhet.* 1354a 1.

dialectical quality of *narratio* found in such authors as Cicero and Quintilian, and comparing my findings with some of the prominent features of Augustine's exegesis in these sermons, I maintain that his dialectical strategy most certainly is compatible with his theology of Scripture that I have sketched thus far. Third, I consider his figurative reading practice, which sets these sermons apart from those preached to the catechumens and neophytes, as the outgrowth of his dialectical concern, and I claim that his figurative reading of Scripture in these sermons is rooted in the dialectical character of *narratio*. Finally, I turn to examine in greater detail Augustine's application of this strategy in three episodes that have proven to be central in each of the previous stages as well: creation, the flood, and the exodus. Through the examination of these episodes, the continuity with and development of the previous two stages is given greater precision, for which his figurative reading practice proves to be key.

A Dialectical Strategy

As catechumens and neophytes, Augustine's audience belonged to a largely predefined stage in their spiritual development, but as members of the faithful they joined a body of people with a far greater degree of diversity. Indeed, the diversity of the faithful in Augustine's congregation is, perhaps, the greatest challenge to readers grappling with Augustine's homiletical strategy in these sermons. Within his congregation at Hippo there were people from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds with varying degrees of liberal and religious education. There were both rich and poor present, possibly even both masters and slaves.[4] Some in his audience,

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[4] See *serm.* 192.2, *serm.* 85.2-3, and *serm.* 123.5. The social makeup of Augustine's congregation is far from a settled question. R. Macmullen suggests that Augustine's listeners were, by and large, well-to-do, though he admits that there was more diversity during the major liturgical feasts. See "The Preacher's Audeience (AD 350-400)" *JTS* 40 (1989): 503-511. M. Pellegrino, similarly, assumes social homogeneity among Augustine's audience in "General Introduction," WSA III/1, 85-88. On the other hand, Gert Partoens emphasizes the diversity of his audience in "Augustin als Prediger," in *Augustin Handbuch*, ed. Volker Drecoll (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 245. For a similar perspective, see Maurice Pontet *L'Exégèse de S. Augustin Prédicateur* (Paris: Aubier, 1946), 55-62. Cf.

Augustine says, were more intelligent (*intelligentiores*), capable of understanding what he taught (*capaces*), while others were slower (*tardiores*) and had to be guided along more carefully.[5] Of the intelligent, he tells us that some had secular learning with little or no familiarity with the Bible; others were illiterate but had understanding of religious matters by listening to Scripture being expounded in Church.[6] His great challenge as a preacher, therefore, was to appeal to his diverse congregation. It is here, I suggest, in his answer to this challenge, that we find the initial hints of his dialectical strategy in these sermons at work.

A Dialogical Style

Augustine's attempt to accommodate his message to the diversity of his audience results in what is perhaps the most obvious feature of these sermons for readers: their informal and "popular" style.[7] This feature is so obvious that its significance is often overlooked. However, I suggest that this style is an important part of his underlying strategy. Augustine explains that he wants all present to benefit from his sermons, so he tailors his presentation so that the slower members will keep up. After all, he says, when two people are walking together, the faster walker always takes the pace of the slower one.[8] Therefore, he preferred to use common terms and crude metaphors throughout his sermons, rather than the more sophisticated language we find in many

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Anthony Dupont, *Gratia in Augustine's Sermones Ad Populum During the Pelagian Controversy* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 11.

[5] *Serm.* 52.20; *serm.* 379.

[6] See *serm.* 14.4; *serm.* 32.2; *serm.* 51.14; *serm.* 122.3; *serm.* 123.1; *serm.* 134.2; *serm.* 152.11; *serm.* 241.5; *serm.* 247.1.

[7] Pellegrino, "General Introduction," WSA III/1, 111. The most common example of this simple or "humble" style is *serm.* 7, which caused both Erasmus and the Maurists to hesitate in accepting its authenticity.

[8] *Serm.* 229M.3.

of his treatises. Furthermore, on a number of occasions we find him re-telling a familiar story for the sake of members of his audience who were inattentive when he rehearsed it in the past.[9] Michael Cameron has referred to Augustine's special attention to the slower members as his "bottom-up" approach, which, he says, stands in contrast to the "top-down" approach found in many of his other writings.[10] Still, there are matters which the slower members will not be able to understand. Yet, even in these matters he pays special attention to the "little ones" (*paruuli*). He encourages them to believe in faith those things they do not understand, even while the more intelligent members rejoice that they understand them.[11] By putting into practice what they know in faith, he says, the slower members will grow in understanding: "Trust God's instructions, and carry them out, and he will give muscle to your understanding."[12] Just like newborns who must feed on milk before they can eat solids, Augustine encourages these "little ones," saying, "Take the milk patiently, in order later on to be able to feed on the solid food avidly."[13]

As Christine Mohrmann and André Mandouze have both pointed out, Augustine's pastoral concern for the "little ones" in his flock gives his sermons to the faithful a distinct dialogical tone. Far from being "an artfully composed lecture," Mohrmann notes, Augustine's sermons to the faithful resemble "a conversation between preacher and congregation."[14]

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[9] See *serm.* 32.2, where he explains that he will tell the story of David and Goliath for the sake of those "who are at least attentive now but were less so at other times," even though it might be "thoroughly stale and familiar" to the "eager and attentive students of the divine literature" (Hill, 2:138).

[10] Michael Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere: Augustine's Early Figurative Exegesis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 138.

[11] *Serm.* 118.2 (PL 38 672; Hill, 4:225).

[12] *Serm.* 117.17 (PL 38 671; Hill, 4:221): *credite praeceptis dei, et facite illa, et donabit uobis robur intelligentiae.*

[13] *Serm.* 117.16 (PL 38 670; Hill, 4:220): *lactare patienter, ut auide pascaris.*

[14] Christine Mohrmann, *Die Altchristliche Sondersprache in den Sermones des HI. Augustin* (Amsterdam: A.M. Hakkert, 1965), 18. Quoted in Pellegrino, "General Introduction," WSA III/1, 111.

Similarly, Mandouze comments that these sermons read very much like informal "dialogues with the crowd."[15] It is true; Augustine's sermons often take on the character of a dialogue. He would often pose questions to his audience based on the readings for that day, instead of stating his points directly.[16] For example, in *serm.* 22, he invites his congregation to consider how the words of judgement in Ps. 68 should be interpreted by asking them, "is [the psalmist] wishing it on people, or . . . foreseeing what is going to happen?"[17] Another time we find him telling his audience to ponder the meaning of a passage by actually responding to him: "Now think hard," he says, "and instruct me; I'm appointing you the teacher, and making myself the child."[18] In addition, he often speaks to his congregation rather informally. For example, when dealing with a particularly difficult passage, he frequently pleads with them to pay attention.[19] The Latin *attendere* appears more than 700 times in his sermons, while the plural imperative (*attende*) appears more than 100 times and the singular imperative is used nearly 200 times.[20] The informal, dialogical quality of these sermons, in many ways, serves as their chief defining mark.

But the "simple" appearance of his sermons should not mislead us into thinking that they lack the unified strategy of a trained rhetorical mind.[21] At times flashes of his rhetorical training

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[15] A. Mandouze, *St. Augustin. L'aventure de la raison et de la grâce* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1968), 591.

[16] See, for example, *serm.* 22A.7.

[17] *Serm.* 22.1 (CCSL 41 289; Hill, 2:41): *aut uero cum haec dicit propheta, optat ea hominibus ac non potius uentura praeuidet?*

[18] *Serm.* 53.12 (PL 38 370; Hill, 3:72): *modo iam cogita, et doce me: adhibeo te doctorem, et me paruulum facio. doce me, obsecro te. quis est qui sedet in palmo suo?*

[19] See, for example, *serm.* 13.6 and *serm.* 4.33.

[20] See Daniel Doyle, "The Bishop as Teacher," in *Augustine and Liberal Education*, ed. Paffenroth and Kevin Hughes (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000), 86.

[21] Pellegrino, "General Introduction," 111. Christine Mohrmann, for example, has distilled Augustine's "homiletical style" into three features. She writes, "saint Augustin a consciemment créé un style homilétique qui devait réponre aux besoins de la prédication populaire. Dans ce style il recherche trois choses: en premier lieu et avant tout la

shine through in rather obvious ways. As Pellegrino comments, "[I]n some sermons Augustine

feels obliged to adapt his tone to the liturgical solemnities being celebrated. In these cases, we

have an 'ornate eloquence' with sections of 'lyrical prose' in which the preacher makes

especially abundant use of the rhetorical devices he had spent so many years learning and

teaching."[22] Numerous times in his sermons to the faithful he alters his style in order to appeal to

those at various levels of understanding. For this he employs a variety of rhetorical genres—

sometimes even in the same sermon.[23] Nevertheless, just as we saw with his sermons to the

catechumens and neophytes, the true strength of his strategy makes itself known in a subtler,

more comprehensive way. His popular style should not be seen as a concession to the challenge

of such a diverse audience, but rather as the means by which he harnesses that challenge in

service of his overarching strategy. In fact, the popular style is itself the mark of a carefully

crafted oration.[24] Given Augustine's ability to communicate in sophisticated genres, what we

have in his sermons to the faithful reveals what Pellegrino calls a remarkable "capacity for

adaptation to audience and circumstances that is the gift of every real orator."[25]

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claret, puis l'expressivité, et en troiséme lieu la gravité, l'onction." Christine Mohrmann, "Saint Augustin prédicateur," in *Études sur la latin des Crétiens*, 2nd ed. (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1961), 396.

[22] Pellegrino, "General Introduction," 113.

[23] See, for example, *serm.* 184. On the rhetorical style of Augustine's sermons in general, see M. Inviolata Barry, *St. Augustine, the Orator: A Study of the Rhetorical Qualities of St. Augustine's Sermones ad populum* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1924); Roy J. Deferrari, "St. Augustine's Method of Composing and Delivering Sermons," *The American Journal of Philology* 43 (1922): 97-123; Hubertus Drobner, "'I Would Rather Not Be Wearisome to You': St. Augustine and Preacher," *Melita Theologica* 51 (2000): 117-126; J. García, "La 'conversion' de la rhétorique au message chrétien dans la predication de S. Augustin," *Connaissance des Pères de l'Église* 99 (2005): 52-68; A. Verwilghen, "Rhétorique et predication chez saint Augustin," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 120 (1998): 223-248.

[24] Pellegrino, "General Introduction," 111.

[25] Pellegrino, "General Introduction," 113.

Moreover, this strategy has a distinct purpose. Hildegund Müller has emphasized the point that Augustine's dialogical style is carefully manufactured, or "invented," so that, by appealing to the lowest common denominator, he is able to overcome the challenges posed by the diversity of his audience and to galvanize the faithful together into a unified group.[26] Peter Brown has similarly said that the perception of homogeneity among Augustine's congregation is something largely contrived by the bishop of Hippo. Augustine intentionally glosses over the differences between members of his congregation, in terms of social standing, education, and morality, Brown claims, in order "to preserve the sense of unity in his flock."[27] To be sure, Augustine does not speak to his congregation as dock workers, farmers, merchants or peasants, but simply as those who are living in a common "season of faith" (*tempore fidei*),[28] as those who are defined by the trust they place in God and the hope it produces.[29] They are united as those who delight in the Lord, he tells them,[30] as "companions in believing" (*simul credamus*) and "companions in seeking" (*simul quaeramus*).[31] His "popular" style, therefore, enables him to address his congregation as a unified whole, despite their educational, social, and economic differences.

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[26] Hildegund Müller, "Preacher: Augustine and his Congregation," in *The Blackwell Companion to Augustine*, ed. Mark Vessey (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 307.

[27] Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press; revised edition, 2007), 247.

[28] *Serm.* 43.1 (PL 38 254; Hill, 2:238). The single exception to this is found in *serm.* 87.2, where he directly addresses "the farmers among you" (*agricolae*). Pontet has suggested that this does not mean he singled out a group in his own congregation, but rather that he was likely preaching in a rural church where the whole congregation was likely made up of farmers. Maurice Pontet, *L'exégèse de S. Augustin, Prédicateur* (Paris: Aubier, 1946), 50. It is worth also pointing to *serm*. 94, where Augustine addresses heads of households as bishops over their families and slaves. However, only a fragment of this sermon remains, so one should be cautious about drawing conclusions from it regarding Augustine's audience or his manner of addressing them.

[29] *Serm.* 22A.2, 6, 9.

[30] *Serm.*21A.1.

[31] *Serm.* 53.12 (PL 38 370; Hill, 3:72).

According to Brown, this technique is specifically aimed at unifying Augustine's Catholic congregation against their Donatist opposition.[32] But, as Müller points out, while this is surely a welcomed by-product, the core of Augustine's strategy is designed to facilitate the spiritual growth of those in his congregation. She observes that Augustine shows a strong predilection for metaphors involving communal movement in order to convey to his congregation that they are all on a "transformative journey" to their "individual and collective salvation."[33] It is this collective journey that provides the principal point of commonality that cuts across all social, economic, and educational barriers. He uses the particularly vivid example of a crew upon a boat to great effect. In one place he tells them that they are all members of the same crew sailing on the same ship: "You may not be on the bridge, brothers and sisters, or at the helm, but that does not mean, does it, that you are not sailing in the same boat?"[34] He picks up on a similar image in *serm.* 75, where he says that they are all in one boat, which is the Church, being tossed about by the temptations of this world but on their way to safe harbour if only they can all stay on board.[35] He is also fond of addressing them as fellow travellers on the same journey, "walking by faith and by hope" (*per fidem ambulas et per spem*).[36] Certainly, then, being unified against Donatist opposition was important, but, for Augustine, his strategy always served a spiritual goal. "Why am I speaking," he asks, "Why am I sitting here? What do I

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[32] Brown, *Augustine*, 247.

[33] Müller, "Preacher," 308.

[34] *En. Ps.* 106.7 (CCSL 40 1517): *quid enim, fratres, quia ad eadem gubernacula non sedetis, non in eadem naui nauigatis?*

[35] *Serm.* 75.4.

[36] *Serm.* 22A.4 (CCSL 41 305; Hill, 2:53). Cf. *serm.* 75.2.

live for, if not with this intention, that we should all live together with Christ."[37] His goal is the

spiritual progress of his audience. By crafting a popular style in order to overcome the diversity

of his congregation, he can address them as a unified body on a common, transformative journey.

The Exercitatio Animi

What, exactly, is the transformative journey he and his congregation are on? The answer to this

question is found, once again, by paying attention to the dialogical tone he employs. As Paul

Kolbet points out, the dialogical quality of Augustine's sermons is reminiscent of the

pedagogical strategy at work in his early dialogues. There, his dialogical strategy is central for

his goal of leading his students into a dialectical process in the pursuit of truth. Rather than

overtly stating his case, he relies on indirect communication to gently prod his students toward

the truth:

> At Cassiciacum, Augustine was quite reticent in confronting students too directly about
> the diseases infecting their souls. He worried that harshness would only create emotional
> resistance in them. Every ancient reader of Homer knew that Achilles could not hear the
> truth about his anger even when confronted about it by the most eloquent Phoenix.
> Augustine approached his students, therefore, indirectly through conversations whose
> outcome he claimed not to know in advance.[38]

These dialogues reveal what Kolbet calls Augustine's "operative theory" which "guided his

teaching" throughout his life, including in his sermons.[39] The entire process is guided by a

dialectical movement, wherein one is "entangled in something of a maze of competing

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[37] *Serm.* 17.2 (CCSL 41 238; Hill, 1:367): *quare loquor? quare hic sedeo? quare uiuo? nisi hac intentione, ut cum christo simul uiuamus?*

[38] Paul Kolbet, "Formal Continuities Between Augustine's Early Philosophical Teaching and Late Homiletical Practice," *SP* 43 (2003), 150-151.

[39] Kolbet, "Formal," 150.

propositions that vie for ascendancy."[40] Through consideration of these propositions, one

advances in one's spiritual education. It is, then, a pedagogical method intended on removing

both intellectual and affective impediments to the soul's progression from the carnal realm to the

spiritual realm.[41] The similar dialogical approach found in his sermons to the faithful, therefore,

ought to alert us to Augustine's concern to facilitate the *exercitatio animi* by guiding the

members of his congregation into deeper understanding of their faith through the meditation on

Scripture.

Just as in his early dialogues, Augustine's homiletical goal is not for his audience to

passively appreciate his words, but rather to "press beyond them to apprehend wisdom

themselves."[42] His goal is for their spiritual eyes to be "enlightened" (*illuminantur*) so as to be

able to see God.[43] He exhorts them, saying: "Force your heart to think about divine matters,

compel it, drive it on. Anything that occurs to it in its thinking which is like a body, fling it

away."[44] The process was just as important as the content, for Augustine. Therefore, rather than

arguing directly from propositions or doctrines, he typically invited his hearers to join him in a

shared enquiry into the meaning of Scripture. This process, Kolbet claims, is very similar to the

process of "psychagogy," which he defines as "those philosophically articulated traditions of

therapy—common in Hellenistic literature—pertaining to how a mature person leads the less

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[40] Paul Kolbet, "Augustine Among the Ancient Therapists," in *Augustine and Psychology*, ed. Sandra Dixon and Kim Paffenroth (Lanham, MD: Lexingtom Books, 2013), 99.

[41] Paul Kolbet, *Augustine and the Cure of Souls. Revising a Classical Ideal* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 188.

[42] Kolbet, "Formal," 153.

[43] *Serm.* 53.6 (PL 38 366; Hill, 3:67).

[44] *Serm.* 53.11 (PL 38 369; Hill, 3:71): *coge cor tuum cogitare diuina, compelle, urge. quidquid simile corporis cogitanti occurrerit, abiice.*

mature to perceive and internalize wisdom for themselves."[45] The goal of the whole process is to "facilitate [the audience's] growth in self-knowledge and personal transformation."[46] The especially useful part of this dialogic process is its applicability to all, regardless of social or educational standing. Kolbet writes: "This was a therapy for all, rhetorically adapted to all psychic states with the resources to liberate both the learned and the unlearned from their false beliefs and lead them by steps gradually along the same path toward a wisdom which is undiminished by being possessed by all."[47] The humble or popular elements of Augustine's sermons—his digressions, repetitions, and choice of metaphors—must be read with this process in mind, as pedagogical techniques that only make sense "when one pauses and asks of the passage, how does this lead the soul?"[48]

Conclusion

In sum, while Augustine's sermons to the faithful resist neat rhetorical categorization, they do reveal a distinct strategy which is centred on guiding the soul through dialectical exercises. The dialogical style, marked by a popular and pastoral tone, sets the collection of sermons to the faithful apart as "a distinct project in its own right with its own intellectual challenges and philosophical and theological tasks."[49] There is, then, an overarching strategy detectible in these sermons that distinguishes them from sermons preached to the catechumens and neophytes. In the ancient world, orators understood themselves as doctors of the soul who applied words to

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[45] Kolbet, *Cure*, 8. See also Cameron's comments in *Christ Meets*, 82.

[46] Kolbet, "Formal," 153. Cf. *serm.* 36.1.

[47] Kolbet, "Therapists," 99.

[48] Kolbet, "Formal," 154.

[49] Kolbet, "Formal," 154.

help their patients heal from their present infirmity and to grow in wisdom. This is very similar

to the way Augustine describes his task of preaching to the faithful. He speaks of himself as the

divine doctor's assistant, with the ministry of applying medicines to the wounds of his

congregation so they might grow in spiritual maturity.[50] Through a dialogical and dialectical

process, Augustine offers his congregation the divine medicine of Scripture that brings healing to

the soul.

Philosophy or Rhetoric?

If it is true that Augustine's strategy in these sermons is, first and foremost, dialectical, it is

important to ask the question, how does his dialogical style and the dialectical strategy it reveals

square with my larger claim that Augustine read and mediated Scripture through the rhetorical

lens of *narratio*? In Kolbet's account, he makes a sharp distinction between psychagogy and

rhetoric. Like rhetoric, psychagogy seeks to delight the soul through pleasing language.

However, unlike rhetoric, he claims, it has the philosophical aim of leading the soul to wisdom,

truth, and self-knowledge.[51] It would seem as if this is not a rhetorical strategy at all, but a

philosophical one. However, with Augustine things can rarely be this neatly delineated. As I will

show in this section, the dialectical strategy Augustine uses is far more rhetorical than it might

initially appear. In fact, the kind of dialectical process he finds in Scripture resembles very

closely the dialectical principles found most notably in *narratio*.[52]

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[50] *Serm.* 32.1. Cf. *serm.* 9.10.

[51] Kolbet, *Cure*, 36. This division of psychagogy and rhetoric plays an important role throughout Kolbet's work.

[52] Plato ascribes to dialectic the highest place of all human arts. He gave it the climactic place in his educational programme as the last step in a one's education. On the other hand, it can be defined as the art of disputation, of searching out precise definitions, and forming and evaluating logical syllogisms. In many ways, this distinction gets to the heart of the tension between rhetoric and philosophy in antiquity. Traditionally, there were three branches of the *artes liberale*: theoretical, practical, and poetical. Rhetoric, with its concern for oratory, most naturally belonged

Dialectic and Narratio

Kolbet is not alone in drawing such a sharp distinction between rhetorical and philosophical tasks. It is a distinction that goes back as far as Plato, who famously denounced rhetoric as a practical art on the basis that it concerns the form of presentation and not ideas themselves.[53] Similarly, Aristotle pointed out that the tasks of rhetoric and philosophy are different, just as their mode of employment differs. Dialectic is the proper mode for the philosopher, for it guides and teaches in matters of truth. Rhetoric, on the other hand, deals not with truth per se, but rather with plausibility.[54] Yet, the rhetorical tradition Augustine inherited attempted to hold rhetoric and philosophy in a much tighter relationship. Cicero bemoaned what he saw as the separation of thought and form created by distinguishing too sharply between philosophy and rhetoric. It is like separating the mind from the body, he claimed, which spells sure disaster.[55] Instead, Cicero sought to find what John O'Banion has called the "unifying flow of language," in which one can find the unity of thought and form.[56] In a similar vein, Quintilian shows that rhetoric, in its very nature, unites *res* and *verba* by communicating conceptual content through words and thereby

among the practical arts, while philosophy was the domain of theoretical inquiry. Quintilian, *Inst*. 2.18.5. Michael Scanlon has characterized rhetoric as "self-consciously, language ordained toward action" at its root. Michael J. Scanlon, "Augustine and Theology as Rhetoric," *AugStud* 25 (1994), 38. But thinkers were divided over what role rhetoric has in dealing with theoretical matters. Those who denied rhetoric a place among the theoretical and poetical branches of the liberal arts held that dialectic was the proper mode of discourse on theoretical topics, and rhetoric was not primarily dialectical. For the philosophers' opinions of rhetoric, see Plato's *Gorgias*, where Socrates enters into an extended discussion with an interlocutor, Gorgias, about the nature of rhetoric. Throughout the dialogue, Plato takes a disparaging view of rhetoric. Cf. Senica, *ep*. 88.2. For the rhetoricians' view of philosophy, see Cicero, *De orat*. 1.53ff.; 1.15.68-69; 3.20.76ff.; Quint. *Inst*. 1.9ff.

[53] Plato, *Gorgias*.

[54] *Rhet.* 1354a 1.

[55] *Orat.* 3.6.24.

[56] O'Banion, *Reorienting Rhetoric: The Dialectic of List and Story* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1992), 63.

synthesizing that conceptual content (*res*) with linguistic formulation (*verba*).[57] For Cicero and

Quintilian, and for their followers, the unity of thought and form, of *res* and *verba*, means that

rhetoric can be suited for techniques that might otherwise be reserved for philosophical

exercises.

It is in the unity of thought and form, above all, that rhetoric's inherent dialectical quality

is found. Every rhetorical work is designed with an opposing view in mind, whether represented

physically, as in a court of law, or hypothetically, as in a political speech to an assembly. There

is always a principle that resembles very closely the art of dialectic at work between the *causa*

(case) being made and an alternative position, in order to lead an audience from the form to the

truth of the matter. [58] There is a back-and-forth quality to rhetoric, just as in dialectic, in which

two people or concepts contribute to greater clarity of some universal principle to which

particular manifestations belong.[59] Herein lies the great power of *narratio*, Cicero claims, with

its inherent ability to integrate otherwise unconnected terms, events and figures into a single,

coherent whole by way of a dialectical process. *Narratio* consistently makes use of analogy and

metaphor in order to move the audience back and forth between the *verba* and the *res*.[60] In

narratio, one describes such things as bear the semblance of truth, Cicero states.[61] One can

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[57] *Inst.* 3.5.1. This construction is reminiscent of Augustine's discussion of signs in books 1-3 of his *De doctrina christiana*. Only there Augustine prefers to use the term *signa* instead of *verba*.

[58] See Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 34. There it is made clear that this dialectical quality is more or less present depending on the kind of speech being given. In the judicial speech it is most evident, in the demonstrative speech it is least evident, and in the deliberative speech it is only moderately evident (pp. 34-39). This reveals a certain "contemplative movement away from the goal of *actio*," which was its original purpose. There was, then, a development in the application of rhetoric. Lousberg, *Handbook*, 19.

[59] Dialectic is, then, dialogical. Joseph T. Lienhard has defined it as "the art of learning the truth through dialogue." Joseph T. Leinhard, "Reading the Bible and Learning to Read: The Influence of Education on St. Augustine's Exegesis" *AugStud* 27 (1996), 19.

[60] *Orat.* 2.66.264.

[61] *Orat.* 2.66.264.

depict actions of men, for example, which resemble justice or injustice. However, the goal of the narrator is not to have the audience remain on the plain of similitudes, but rather to apprehend justice itself in order to be able to judge whether the men in question acted justly or not. It relies on an inner dialectical tension between terms, characters, and events in order to guide one beyond the similitudes to apprehend the reality. Cicero explains that the dialectic of *narratio* can occur on a number of different levels. It can occur on the basis of the whole work, of one of its parts, or even on the basis of one of its signs.[62] Each individual part of the *narratio* plays an important role in communicating the author's *causa* or *uoluntas*, and so each part contributes to this fundamental task.

For this reason, the neat separation between philosophical and rhetorical ends cannot be maintained in Augustine.[63] Though technically distinct from the art of dialectic, rhetoric in general, and *narratio* in particular, possess the unique ability to hold thought and form together, which enables them to exercise a dialectical function. There are principles embedded within *narratio* that lend themselves to a dialectical reading, and it is these principles, as we will see, that Augustine makes abundant use of in his application of Scripture to the faithful.

Dialectical Principles in Scripture

Given the importance of *narratio* for Augustine's reading of Scripture we have observed thus

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[62] *Top.* 2.

[63] The closest Kolbet comes to recognizing the role rhetoric plays in Augustine's psychagogical process is when he speaks of "rhetorically enhanced philosophy," which could "manipulate souls to choose their own good." Kolbet, *Cure*, 60-61. He recognizes the importance of Augustine's rhetorical background but only as a tool to enhance his philosophical goals. "Augustine's conversion brought about many changes in his life, but none were more significant than his resolution to use his rhetorical gifts only for good. His life would continue to be one where he made use of his eloquence, but now he would attempt to write and speak in such a way that his words would lead people to see the truth for themselves. If beautiful words could make lies seem true, could they not also lead people to delight in the truth itself?" Kolbet, "Therapists," 98.

far, and given the dialectical quality of *narratio* I have just outlined above, it should come as no

surprise that Scripture plays a central role in Augustine's strategy.[64] Henri-Irénée Marrou pointed

out years ago Augustine's proclivity to place two interpretations of a particular passage side by

side, often without resolving which interpretation is correct, in order to have his audience engage

in an inner dialectic as they pondered the competing interpretations.[65] We often find him inviting

his audience to explore the meaning of a particular passage with him, as he does in *serm.* 60,

where he says, "Let's look for an answer together."[66] In fact, as Michael Cameron has shown, for

Augustine, this dialectical process as a homiletical strategy is drawn from Scripture itself:

"[B]ecause divine reality transcends our poor earthly experience, we must approach indirectly by

similitudes, *per speculum et in aenigmate.* This unfolding of images effects the same movement

as purely dialectical analysis. All aspects of the exercises, the slow development of arguments,

detours of discussion, and so on, give the soul a double fruit: first, that of acquiring the truth, and

second, the capacity to understand and savor it."[67] The very nature of scriptural revelation

requires the reader to engage in a dialectical process.

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[64] Leinhard has identified this as Augustine's "dialectical mind," which he says is especially pervasive in his exegesis. Leinhard, "Reading," 21. Though half of his early works are exercises in dialectic, Augustine rarely discusses dialectic directly in any detail. Instead, one must probe beneath the surface to find it at work in his thought. The only place where dialectic receives any concentrated treatment is in his partially finished, *De dialectica*.

[65] H.-I. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1958), 456. See, for example, *serm.* 27.5.

[66] *Serm.* 60.5 (Hill, 3:135). An excellent example of this at work is found in *serm.* 71, where Augustine addresses the question of what it means to blaspheme the Holy Spirit—a question of which he says, "there is probably no greater, no more difficult problem to be found in all the holy scriptures." *Serm.* 71.8. He then goes on in this lengthy sermon to explore with his audience possible interpretations.

[67] Michael Cameron, "Totus Christus and the Psychogogy of Augustine's Sermons," *AugStud* 36 (2005): 61. Cameron has pointed out that Augustine's ultimate goal in preaching is the *exercitatio animi*, the exercise of the soul in order to rise beyond the sensible realm to the contemplation of the eternal.

Cameron's description of Augustine's hermeneutic resembles very closely Cicero's description of how rhetoric is used to lead beyond the realm of material images. Cicero explains that, when dealing with things that are not tangible, one must communicate by redefining ordinary terms in a metaphorical sense. He draws a distinction between those things that "can be seen or touched" and those things that "are incapable of being touched or proved, but which can be perceived by the mind and understood."[68] When dealing with the latter, one must redefine terms belonging to the former. This is the task *narratio* is especially well-suited for. He identifies a number of kinds of arguments that can be used to lead one dialectically from things which can be perceived by the senses to things which can only be perceived by the mind. Three of the arguments he defines are especially useful for my purpose in this study: arguments from likeness (*a similitudine*), arguments from contrariety (*a contraria*), and arguments from difference (*a differentia*).[69] As we will see, each of these arguments plays a significant role in how Augustine mediates Scripture to the faithful.

Arguments *a similitudine* rely on the likeness between two things to draw out deeper meaning of a particular character or image within the *narratio*. When the Bible uses anthropomorphic terms to speak of God, for example, it uses an argument from similitude, since God does not actually have a physical body like humans do, despite being depicted in anthropomorphic terms. Finding this principle at work in the Bible was important for Augustine's own conversion to Christianity. Prior to his conversion, he had believed, along with the Manichees, that when the Bible states that humanity is made in the image of God (Gen.

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[68] Cicero, *Top.* 5.

[69] Cicero, *Top.* 2.7-8. Topics, Cicero explains, refers to the "art of discovering arguments." The importance of these three arguments for later biblical interpretation is traced in G. R. Evans, *The Language and Logic of the Bible: The Earlier Middle Ages* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 111-113.

1:26), it implies that God has a physical body. But, through Ambrose, he learned that Catholics do not read the Bible that way.[70] Instead, he came to see that the Bible often speaks by way of similitudes in order to communicate something only perceivable by the mind.

Once he found the argument *a similitudine* in Scripture, it became an important trope for his hermeneutic, and he relies on it numerous times in his sermons to the faithful. It is very important, for example, when he explains what Scripture means when it speaks of wealth. In *serm*. 36, he preaches on Prov. 13:7-8, which reads: "One man pretends to be rich, yet has nothing; another pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth. The ransom of a man's life is his wealth, but a poor man has no means of redemption" (RSV). Augustine points out that this passage, when taken literally, does not seem to offer very helpful advice. In fact, it contradicts what we know from the rest of Scripture, which is that one is not saved by material riches. He explains to his audience that this passage is speaking according to the argument *a similitudine*, for it uses a material image to convey an immaterial meaning based on a certain immaterial likeness the two things share. Including his audience in the process of finding this out is important for Augustine, so he turns with them to 2 Cor. 8:9, which states that Jesus became "poor" for us, though he was "rich," in order that we might be "enriched by his poverty."[71] This is a clearer example of an argument *a similitudine*, which can shed light on the Proverbs passage. Christ's material poverty cannot possibly be the source of our material wealth. Instead, Christ's poverty must refer to the emptying of his divinity, and our wealth must refer to our partaking of his divinity. There is a similitude in the fact that just as material wealth has value in the realm of material things, so also immaterial wealth has value in the spiritual realm. Turning back to the

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[70] See *Conf*. 6.4.

[71] *Serm.* 36.3 (Hill, 2:175).

passage from Proverbs, then, he concludes that Scripture is drawing on the same likeness

between material and immaterial wealth as in the 2 Corinthians passage. By referring to material

wealth metaphorically, the interpreter must enter into an inner dialectic between "species and its

parts," in Cicero's words, which guides one from what is said literally to the contemplation of

truth.[72]

Arguments *a contraria* use contrasts to forcefully make a point. An example of such an

argument can be found where the Bible speaks of the wisdom of this world being foolishness to

God in 1 Cor. 3:19, or in the contrast between the wide and narrow roads Jesus speaks of in Matt.

7:13-14. In the former, the greatness of God's wisdom is magnified by placing worldly wisdom

beside it. In the latter, the challenge of living a godly life is put into stark relief by the contrast of

the ease in living a sinful life. This is a fairly straightforward argument, and one that Augustine

relies on heavily in his sermons to the faithful, where we find him often pointing out recurring

contrasts throughout the divine *narratio*. He contrasts those who have faith with those who lack

it;[73] spiritual people, who constitute the Church, with worldly people, who are the Church's

enemies;[74] eternal punishment with eternal rest;[75] the humility of God and the pride of

humanity;[76] temporal reward with eternal reward;[77] avarice with extravagance;[78] the sick with the

healthy;[79] things that are invisible with things that can be seen with the physical eye;[80] and Jews

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[72] Cicero, *Top.* 7.

[73] *Serm.* 55.1.

[74] *Serm.* 56.8.

[75] *Serm.* 70.3.

[76] *Serm.* 70A.2.

[77] *Serm.* 80.7.

[78] *Serm.* 86.6.

with Gentiles.[81] And the list could go on. In each of these instances, there is a dialectic at work in which the reader comes to contemplate an abstract truth by holding both contrasting images in mind.

Finally, arguments *a differentia* are found where a distinction is made between two related things in order to communicate something of significance. Augustine finds this argument at work in a number of places throughout Scripture. For example, he finds it in the genealogies of Matthew and Luke. Matthew counts the generations from Abraham forward, he observes, while Luke counts the generations from Jesus backward. What could be the reason for this difference? Augustine suggests that the divine author is alerting us to the mystery of Christ's ascent and descent.[82] By holding upward and downward movement of each genealogy in tension, the reader is spurred on to contemplate the true nature of Christ and his work.[83]

Under this heading could also be included examples where the scriptural account adds or omits a detail that causes the sequence to run counter to an ordinary understanding. For example, in *serm.* 63B, which Augustine preached on the passage where the woman with an issue of blood touches the hem of Jesus' garment, he points out that it is noteworthy that Luke records Jesus asking, "Who touched me?" (Lk. 8:45). As the Son of God, Jesus would have certainly known who touched him; yet he asks the question anyway. Because there appears to be a difference

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[79] *Serm.* 87.13.

[80] *Serm.* 88.1-6.

[81] *Serm.* 88.10.

[82] *Serm.* 51.31.

[83] Again, Augustine makes use of this kind of argument often in his sermons. In one example, he points out that Christians are called to do two related things in this life: show restraint and endure. *Serm.* 38.1. Augustine says that these two virtues "purify the soul and make it capable of containing God." These two things belong together, but the differences between them sharpen the definition of each. In order to endure in this world, one must restrain from temptations; and the purpose of restraint is to endure.

between what is said and what we know to be the case, the reader is prodded to look for a deeper, hidden meaning: "God's ignorance is a guarantee of a significant mystery; it must surely signify something, when the one who cannot be ignorant is ignorant."[84] He goes on to explain that, based on the similarity between the woman's situation and that of the Gentiles at the time of Christ's appearance, the woman represents the Gentiles who must be cleansed from their self-indulgent, materialistic desires.[85] In this case, therefore, the difference is not between two parts of the *narratio* but between what the reader knows to be the case and what the narrative appears to be saying.

In these three arguments—arguments *a similitudine*, *a contraria*, and *a differentia*—we are able to see how the dialectical principles, which Cicero and Quintilian claim are naturally embedded in *narratio*, are central for how Augustine understands Scripture's character as well. Each of these three arguments plays an important role in how Augustine mediates Scripture to the faithful members of his congregation.

Conclusion

Having been crafted by the master orator, Scripture holds together content and form, *res* and *verba*, in a masterful way. Through a dialectical process, which is present in any well-constructed *narratio*, the reader is lifted beyond the sensible realm to the contemplation of eternal truth. The *verba* guide the reader to the *res*. Far from being a merely philosophical exercise, the dialectical strategy of Augustine's sermons to the faithful bear the marks of what Cicero and Quintilian considered to be the truest form of rhetoric. Thus, when Augustine makes

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[84] *Serm.* 63B.2 (MA 1 612; Hill, 3:181): *ignoratio dei, fiducia mysterii: aliquid uult significare, quando ignorat, qui non potest ignorare.* Cf. *serm.* 77.7.

[85] *Serm.* 63B.2-3.

use of the dialectical principles he finds embedded in the Bible, he is adapting the dialectical

principles inherent within rhetoric in general, and *narratio* in particular, to his spiritual goal.

Figurative Reading

All that I have said thus far leads us right to the heart of Scripture's dialectical process in

Augustine's actual preaching practice. As will already be clear, the dialectical quality inherent

within his view of Scripture as *narratio* requires a certain amount of figurative reading in order

for Scripture to be properly understood. It is through this figurative process that we find the fruit

of the dialectical exercise, for figurative reading requires that one continually make the

intellectual movement from material images to immaterial realities. In this section, I will take a

closer look at two of the key components of the figurative reading practice we find in his

sermons to the faithful: the interplay between open and closed passages, and the harmony

between the various parts of Scripture. This discussion will pave the way for the remainder of the

chapter, where I will focus my attention on Augustine's application of these principles in actual

practice.

Open and Closed Passages

Michael Cameron has rightly identified the interplay between open (*aperta*) and closed (*operta*)

passages as one of the "most basic hermeneutical categories" at work in Augustine's figurative

reading of Scripture.[86] This is especially true in his sermons to the faithful. Augustine tells the

faithful: "Some things in the scriptures are hidden in darkness and call for study, while others are

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[86] Cameron, *Christ Meets*, 6.

within easy reach, being proposed with clarity so as to cure whoever wants to be cured."[87] The

things that are "hidden more thoroughly," he explains, are there "to stretch and test the students,"

while the open passages are made "ready at hand for the immediate treatment of the patients."[88]

Elsewhere he assures his audience that "God doesn't conceal his mysteries because he grudges

them to any who may learn them, but because he only wants to open them up to those who are

prepared to look for them. That's why we have obscure passages read from the scriptures, to spur

us on, heart and soul, to the search."[89] There is an interplay, then, between the passages of

Scripture that are difficult to understand and those that are more obvious, which work together to

guide readers into Scripture's figurative process. Augustine explains in a rather clear passage in

serm. 45 that, even though Scripture sometimes speaks "openly" (*aperte*) and sometimes

"obscurely in a mystery" (*in mysterio obscure*), the "will of God" (*uoluntas Dei*) is "exactly the

same in the obscure passages as it is in the open ones; exactly the same in the shadow as it is in

the sun."[90] The open and closed passages have complimentary meanings and must be read in

light of one another.

He uses Isa. 57:13 as an example of how this interplay works in his figurative

interpretation. There the Lord states that the godly will "possess the land," and inhabit his "holy

mountain." Augustine asks his audience to consider which "land" and "mountain" this verse is

referring to. It is, he explains, an example of an "obscure" or "closed" passage because the true

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[87] *Serm.* 32.1 (CCSL 41 398; Hill, 2:137): *sed tamen alia secretius in scripturis absconduntur ut quaerentes exerceant, alia uero in promptu et in manifestatione ponuntur ut desiderantes curent.*

[88] *Serm.* 32.1 (Hill, 2:137).

[89] *Serm.* 60A.1 (MA 1 320; Hill, 3:138): *mysteria dei non ad hoc celari, quia inuidentur discentibus, sed ut non aperiantur nisi quaerentibus. ad hoc autem de scribturis sanctis clausa recitantur, ut ad quaerendum erigant animum.*

[90] *Serm.* 45.3 (CCSL 41 517; Hill, 2:352-53): *et qualis est in aperto, talis est in obscuro; qualis est in sole, talis est in umbra.*

meaning of these terms is not immediately obvious. But, by bringing "open" passages found

elsewhere in Scripture, where "mountain" and "land" are spoken of in plain terms, in dialogue

with this "closed" passage, the figurative meaning is revealed. Taking "mountain" first, he tells

them that wherever Scripture "openly recommends a mountain" is where Scripture "opens itself

up to say what mountain means."[91] So, when one looks at the meaning Scripture ascribes to the

word "mountain" elsewhere, one finds that it sometimes refers to Christ, and other times to the

Church.[92] This prods the interpreter to look further, which is where the true mystery of the closed

passage is found. While it might seem as if there are two competing interpretations available for

this passage—either Christ or the Church—Augustine points out that these are not actually

competing interpretations, since we are told that the Church is the body of Christ (Eph. 5:31-32).

Therefore, anytime we find a mountain referenced in Scripture, our minds should be drawn to

contemplate the mystical union between Christ and his Church, in which the two become one

flesh (Matt. 19:6).[93] By following the dialectic at work between the open and closed passages,

Augustine has led his readers from the thought of a physical mountain to reflection on the eternal

reality of Christ and his Church. Wherever they find a mountain referred to in Scripture, they

should lift their minds beyond the realm of material images and contemplate this eternal mystery.

The interplay between open and closed passages works in conjunction with the other

dialectical processes proper to *narratio*. This is made clear when Augustine goes on to unearth

the true meaning of "land" in this same passage. He begins by turning to Ps. 142:5, where the

figurative meaning is easier to discern. There the psalmist says that the Lord is his portion "in the

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[91] *Serm.* 45.3 (CCSL 41 517; Hill, 2:253): *ubi aperte tibi commendat montem, et ipsa scriptura se aperit quid dicat montem.*

[92] *Serm.* 45.5-6. Augustine points to Dan. 2:34-35 in support of this claim.

[93] *Serm.* 45.5.

land of the living." He points out the difficulty in taking the "land of the living" to mean this

present earth, since, he says, this earth is a land in which everyone is sure to die. It is most

properly, then, the land of the dying. This is a subtle form of an argument *a differentia*, in which

the difference between what we know to be true and what Scripture appears to be saying spurs us

on to look for a deeper meaning. The land of the living the psalmist is speaking of, Augustine

reasons, must refer in a figurative sense to that which is "eternal and heavenly" (*aeterna et*

coelestis), for only in such a land is true life found.[94] There is, then, also an argument *a*

similitudine at work as well, where the term "land," which ordinarily refers to this earth, is used

to speak of heaven. The similitude is based on the fact that both land on earth and the heavenly

reward are "possessed" (*possidetur*), he explains.[95] But, recognizing this similitude is not

enough. Augustine wants his audience to follow the author's strategy and contemplate the truth

itself. To do this, he draws out the argument *a contraria*, which is also at work here, to show

how different the psalmist's meaning is from what might ordinarily be interpreted by "land." He

explains that "it is called land because it is possessed, not because it is ploughed."[96] It is not

physical land that requires toil, and there are no alterations of seasons. Most importantly, it is the

land "of the living," which contrasts sharply with the earth, which is the land of the dying. The

figurative process has become more complex, but a consistent basic pattern emerges nonetheless:

through arguments *a similitudine*, *a differentia*, and *a contraria*, Scripture guides its readers into

a figurative interpretation of certain passages; these passages then become the "open" passages

that illuminate those that are "closed" more tightly. By establishing that Scripture uses "land" in

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[94] *Serm.* 45.4 (CCSL 41 518; Hill, 2:253).

[95] *Serm.* 45.4 (CCSL 41 518; Hill, 2:253).

[96] *Serm.* 45.4 (CCSL 41 518; Hill, 2:253): *terra dicitur quia possidetur, non quia aratur.*

a figurative sense as a reference to eternal life in the Psalm passage, he is able to amplify the meaning of the Isaiah passage, where the "land" should cause one to contemplate the eternal reality of heaven as well.

This example in *serm.* 45 illustrates how, for Augustine, the interplay between "open" and "closed" passages is central for following the dialectical process embedded within the scriptural *narratio*. Reading Scripture properly, for him, comes down to appreciating Scripture's dialectical quality.

The Harmony of Scripture

Through the figurative reading process, one comes to see the unified, authorial intent of Scripture. Each of the arguments outlined above are means by which *narratio* communicates the *uolontas* of the author. Pellegrino notes that the "fundamental criterion" Augustine sets forth for interpreting Scripture correctly "is the radical *unity* of all the scriptures, a unity deriving from the fact that they have a single author."[97] Indeed, in *serm.* 170, Augustine states: "The divine readings are all as closely connected among themselves as if they formed a single reading, because they all proceed from a single mouth. Many are the mouths of those who exercise the ministry of the word, but it is a single mouth that gives the ministers the words they are to say."[98] However, in actual practice the unity of Scripture is not so much a criterion as the fruit of exegesis. It is by interpreting Scripture figuratively that the author's *uoluntas* is found as that which unifies the work. The unity between the parts of Scripture is found precisely in the tension they appear to create. By allowing the parts of Scripture to work dialectically, the reader is

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[97] Pellegrino, "Introduction," 41.

[98] *Serm.* 170.1 (PL 38 927; Hill, 5:238): *diuinae lectiones omnes ita sibi connectuntur, tanquam una sit lectio: quia omnes ex uno ore procedunt. multa sunt ora ministerium sermonis gerentium: sed unum est os ministros implentis.*

guided beyond the literal to the spiritual meaning, which is where the divine authorial intent is found.

This is most clearly seen in the relationship between the two Testaments. While it might appear at times that the Old and New Testaments are at odds with one another, Augustine assures the faithful that Scripture "in no part disagrees."[99] Despite their apparent discontinuity, there is unity between "the old and new scriptures," for "there grace was promised, here it is given; there it was prefigured, here it is fulfilled."[100] He explains further that the Old Testament is like the wax model which the artist uses to create the real statue by pouring molten gold and silver over it. The new covenant "was obscurely foretold," he teaches, "by those ancient figures." But when the new covenant came, "the prefigurations were disclosed and explained, so that the new covenant could be understood in the promise of the old."[101] Thus, he continually reminds his audience that the narration of past events are layered with meaning to be unpacked throughout the rest of the divine *narratio* and into the present time: "The divine books of the Old Testament usually do not simply attest to an event that occurred, but also suggest the mystery of what is to come."[102] And when read in this way, one finds that the Old Testament contains the gospel.[103] When the reader understands the gospel as the climax of the *narratio*, one is able to read the Old Testament in light of the New, and thereby find the unity in the divine authorial intent. The

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[99] *Serm.* 82.9 (PL 38 510; Hill, 3:374): *scriptura sancta in nulla parte discordat.*

[100] *Serm.* 125A.1 (Hill, 4:265). Cf. *serm.* 25.1-2.

[101] *Serm.* 350A.2 (MA 1 293; Hill, 10:111): *in uetere testamento secundum ueterem hominem uel praecepta uel promissa sunt, figuras esse noui testament.*

[102] *Serm.* 10.1 (CCSL 41 153; Hill, 1:283): *uerumtamen sicut solent diuini ueteres Libri, non solum rei gestae fidem, sed etiam futurae insinuare mysterium.*

[103] *Serm.* 25.2.

interplay between Old and New Testaments is very much like the interplay between the open and closed passages. Both involve a process by which one is led to contemplate spiritual realities.

A similar process can also be found when it comes to the four Gospel accounts themselves. In *serm*. 51, Augustine makes the important connection between finding harmony in meaning and 'spiritual' understanding. He argues that, just as with the Old Testament, the Gospels too must be read on a deeper level than the obvious or literal meaning would suggest. He says, in order to understand this harmony, one must not be materially-minded. There are, he contends, two kinds of people: the materially-minded and the spiritually-minded. Only the latter are able to see through appearances to the meaning that lies beneath. He offers a parallel example to Scripture in the spectacles of the martyrs being thrown to wild beasts, beheaded or burned with fire. He says that the materially-minded people see such spectacles and think "how wretched and unfortunate those martyrs are," while the spiritually-minded see the same spectacles and "don't fix their attention on the mingling of bodies, but instead marvel at the completeness of faith."[104] By rising beyond the material images, the spiritually-minded apprehend the true meaning of the event. The same can be said about the suffering and crucifixion of Christ, or of any of the events in the rest of Scripture. One does not find a unified authorial intent unless one recognizes that Scripture is designed to move its readers beyond the temporal and material realm.

To do this successfully, then, one cannot reduce the interpretation of Scripture to a set of scientific rules. After all, Augustine cautions, certain objects are not always used in a consistent, figurative way. He says that "in parables and comparisons (*similitudinibus*) one thing can be called by many names. . . . Isn't Christ a lamb? Isn't Christ also a lion? . . . Properly speaking,

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[104] *Serm*. 51.2 (CCSL 41 9; Hill, 3:20): *carnales spectant, miseros putantes eos martyres . . . . alii uero sicut et sancti angeli spectant, non attendentes corporum laniatus, sed mirantes fidei integritatem.*

each is quite different from the other; in the comparison (*similitudinem*) he is each of them. More than that, it can happen in comparisons (*similitudinem*) that things which are miles apart from each other are called by the same name. What could be further apart from each other than Christ and the devil? Yet Christ is called a lion, and so is the devil."[105] Scripture does not indicate the Lord every time one finds a stone or a lion. Therefore, he says the figurative meaning "varies according to different places in scripture," and the way to interpret it is to take account of "the whole context of any particular passage."[106] Instead, the proper interpretation of Scripture requires the reader to enter into the inner dialogue going on between the different parts of the *narratio*. One cannot study Scripture dispassionately and expect to penetrate its true meaning.[107] There is a dialogical relationship both within itself and with its reader.[108]

Conclusion

The dialectical principles Augustine finds embedded within the scriptural *narratio* are essential for the two most important components of Augustine's figurative exegesis in his sermons to the

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[105] *Serm.* 73.2 (PL 38 470; Hill, 3:292): *in parabolis autem et similitudinibus potest una res multis nominibus appellari . . . . nonne agnus christus? nonne et leo christus? . . . . Illa singula per proprietatem: ista utrumque per similitudinem. plus etiam est quod accidit, ut per similitudinem multum a se res distantes, uocentur uno nomine. quod enim tam distat ab inuicem, quam christus et diabolus? tamen leo et christus est appellatus, et diabolus.*

[106] *Serm.* 32.6 (Hill, 2:139). Even in matters of morality, he admits that, when one finds commands that appear to contradict each other, one must sometimes fulfil one of the commands and sometimes the other, and so reflect the perfect harmony of Scripture. See *serm.* 82.9.

[107] In *serm.* 89, which he preached at Carthage, Augustine explains that some passages must be interpreted in their "proper sense," others in accordance with their "symbolic meaning," and still others are to be taken according to both. Augustine gives examples of each: the passion of Christ is an example of something to be taken in its proper sense, without any symbolic meaning; when Scripture says that the stone the builders rejected has become the capstone (Ps. 118:22; Matt. 21:42), this should be taken in a symbolic sense; and the story we read in Genesis about Abraham having two sons is not just a story (*narratum*) that was told, but an actual event (*factum*) with symbolic significance. See *serm.* 89.5-6.

[108] Augustine speaks of Scripture as a mirror, which reflects back on its reader. See *en Ps.* 30.3.1. This suggests, once again, that the dialogical style of his sermons to the faithful resembles very closely the dialogical character he finds in Scripture.

faithful: the interplay between open and closed passages and the harmony of the whole divine *narratio*. Both of these components are based on the dialectical strategy found in Scripture. His figurative exegesis, which we have already noted is rooted in his appropriation of *narratio*, is now found to be closely tied with the dialectical principles embedded within the scriptural *narratio*, in particular. Augustine's increased figurative interpretation in his sermons to the faithful is, therefore, the result of his increased attention to Scripture's dialectical character.

Creation, Flood, and Exodus

In both of the previous two stages I have discussed in this study, the three episodes of creation, the flood, and the exodus have played a central role in his use of Scripture as the divine *narratio*. As such, they faithfully illustrated the differences between his application of Scripture to the two audiences. Because these episodes function as high points in Augustine's view of Scripture, I will use them to chart my course through the large body of sermons which Augustine preached to the faithful as well. By examining in detail how he treats these three narrative sequences in his sermons to the faithful, I will be able to draw out more fully how these sermons constitute a third level in his mediation of Scripture. This approach will show how there is continuity between these three stages, in the sense that there is a continuous progression through the three stages of spiritual maturation, but, at the same time, it will show that there are also distinct features that set these sermons apart from those preached to the catechumens and neophytes.

The "Beginning"

Just as in his sermons to the catechumens and the neophytes, the creation narrative appears often in his sermons to the faithful. Augustine references the creation narrative in more than 40 of the

extant sermons which he preached to the faithful, and he alludes to it on many other occasions as well.[109] However, the vast majority of these references are brief and only concern a particular verse in support of a point he is making. Only on seven occasions does he offer commentary on the creation narrative in any detail.[110] On each of these occasions, we find Augustine making full use of the rhetorical devices he finds in the text to draw out Scripture's dialectical and figurative character. This is especially evident in his emphasis on two important parts of the creation story: the question of God's creation in the "beginning" and the mystical significance of the Sabbath.

The first example of Scripture's dialectic at work is found in Augustine's treatment of the word "beginning" from Gen. 1:1. By Augustine's time it was standard patristic practice to read the word "beginning" in the very first line of the Bible, through the lens of Jn. 1:1, as an allusion to the Son's involvement in creation. Thus, Augustine inherited an interpretation in which the Son was understood as the "beginning" in whom God's creative activity was carried out. However, Augustine tells us, the Manichees challenged this kind of reading. They argued that there are no grounds on which to interpret the "beginning" in Genesis as anything but the first moments of time. They claimed that it was illegitimate to read the creation account in light of the Johannine passage. On their reading, then, the Old and New Testaments contradict each other: Genesis says God alone made heaven and earth, and John says all things were made through the Word.[111]

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[109] *Serm.* 1; *serm.* 4; *serm.* 8; *serm.* 9; *serm.* 20; *serm.* 21; *serm.* 23; *serm.* 29; *serm.* 43; *serm.* 49A; *serm.* 52; *serm.* 53; *serm.* 55; *serm.* 65A; *serm.* 68; *serm.* 72; *serm.* 90A; *serm.* 91; *serm.* 96; *serm.* 97; *serm.* 110; *serm.* 110A; *serm.* 118; *serm.* 122; *serm.* 125; *serm.* 125A; *serm.* 126; *serm.* 129; *serm.* 147A; *serm.* 159B; *serm.* 179A; *serm.* 198; *serm.* 224; *serm.* 268; *serm.* 270; *serm.* 291; *serm.* 335C; *serm.* 341; *serm.* 359B; *serm.* 360B; *serm.* 370; *serm.* 374; *serm.* 384; *serm.* 398.

[110] *Serm.* 1; *serm.* 4; *serm.* 9; *serm.* 125; *serm.* 125A; *serm.* 179A; *serm.* 270.

[111] *Serm.* 1.1.

In *serm.* 1, Augustine addresses this issue head-on by seeking the proper interpretation of Gen. 1:1 and thus the proper understanding of the creation narrative.[112] But Augustine realizes that the question of whether or not the traditional Catholic interpretation of "beginning" in Gen. 1:1 is legitimate is really a question regarding how Scripture works. It is a question of how the different parts fit together into a coherent whole, and thus how one is to interpret it. Augustine's answer is telling. He is not primarily interested in proving whether or not the "beginning" in Gen. 1:1 is a reference to the Son, though he most certainly believes that it is. Rather, he is far more interested in teaching his audience to read the creation account, and Scripture more broadly, according to the inner dialectical character it possesses as the divine *narratio*. Here we find Augustine teaching that it is only by allowing oneself to follow the dialectical movement within Scripture itself that the coherence between the various parts of Scripture can be appreciated.

Augustine begins his response by dismissing the surface charge of the Manichees quite easily. First he appeals to the fact that all of Scripture has the same divine author and so reveals the same authorial intent. This should cause one to pause before levelling the charges against Scripture that the Manichees do. However, if one is still not convinced, he turns to Jn. 8:25, where he claims Jesus explicitly identifies himself as "the beginning."[113] Since both Genesis and John have the same divine author, the fact that John unequivocally states that the Son is the

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[112] *Serm.* 1 is dated to before 396, based on the sermon's style and its direct address of the Manichees. For a consideration of this date, see Hill's comments in WSA III/1, 172, n. 1. Connecting these two passages was common in pro-Nicene exegesis, and they are often paired together throughout Augustine's sermons. See *serm.* 291.2; *serm.* 293.5; *serm.* 342.3; *serm.* 379.4; *serm.* 30.3-4. Reading the Son as the "beginning" is present even in Augustine's Easter sermons. However, there he glosses over the exegetical challenges and focuses more specifically on the Christological implications of this reading. See, for example, *serm.* 118 and *serm.* 119, both of which were preached on Easter Sunday. It is worth noting that Ambrose, who is likely the source of Augustine's knowledge of this technique, does not draw out the same dialectical reading as Augustine does. He is focused instead on affirming the divinity of the Son. See, *Hex.* 1.2.5; *Hex.* 1.3.8; cf. *Hex.* 1.4.11-15.

[113] *Serm.* 1.2.

"beginning" proves that the divine author uses the word "beginning" to speak of the Son. This is a clear example of him using the "open" passage of Jn. 8:25 to shed light on the "closed" passage of Gen. 1:1.

But the matter he is addressing—the relationship between the different parts of Scripture—is not quite settled yet. He goes on to note that, even if one accepts that the Son is the "beginning," there is still the question of whether the meaning of the texts cohere. In other words, even if one accepts that "beginning" refers to the Son, it does not follow that both passages claim that all of creation was created "in" him. Augustine points out that John states that all things were made "through" him, while Gen. 1 says that God made heaven and earth "in" him. It is a subtle difference, but it raises a question worth asking because it gets to the heart of the matter. To settle this question, Augustine turns to Paul's letter to the Ephesians, where Paul states that the mystery of God's will (*uoluntas*) is "set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. 1:9-10). Here, Augustine observes "in" (*in ipso*) can easily be understood as "through" (*per ipsum*).[114] Thus, he further justifies the coherence he finds between Gen. 1:1 and Jn. 1:1-3.[115] Again, we find him bringing an "open" passage into conversation with a "closed" passage in order to encourage his listeners to reflect on the divine mystery it contains.

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[114] *Serm.* 1.3 (CCSL 41 3; Hill, 1:170): *quemadmodum itaque hic sic audis quod ait, in ipso, ut intelligas et, per ipsum.*

[115] Augustine points out, finally, that even if one is not convinced that the "beginning" is a reference to the Son, that fact does not mean that Gen. 1:1 is somehow contradictory to John 1. One could take the "beginning" to mean the beginning of time and still understand the presence of the Trinity in the act of creation. The plural a few verses further on, when God says, "Let us make man in our image (Gen. 1:26), should alert readers to this fact. *Serm.* 1.5. Gen. 1:26-27, which speaks of the creation of humankind in God's image, is one of the most cited passages in Augustine's sermons. For some of the more explicit references, see *serm.* 43.3; *serm.* 52.18; *serm.* 53A.4; *serm.* 58.17; *serm.* 90A.6; *serm.* 91.7; *serm.* 126.11; *serm.* 159B.5-6; *serm.* 198.26; *serm.* 335C.12; *serm.* 384.3; *serm.* 398.2.

Augustine is aware that the real issue is not the interpretation of individual passages, but rather the far more fundamental question of the principle at work in the Old and New Testaments. Is it true that it is illegitimate to read the "beginning" as a reference to the Son because the immediate context does not explicitly warrant a trinitarian reading? To answer this, Augustine shows that the two Testaments are in agreement even in not explicitly referencing the Trinity when it is indeed implied. He turns to Rom. 11:36 to make his point. There Paul, speaking of God, says "from him and through him and in him are all things." There is no explicit mention of the Son in this verse, but Paul clearly does not mean to exclude him. Rather, he implies the presence of each member of the Trinity without explicitly stating so.[116] Thus, even if one denies that the "beginning" spoken of in Gen. 1:1 is an explicit reference to the Son, this cannot rule out the Son's involvement in creation, as the Manichees claim.[117] A different interpretation of the word "beginning," then, does not mean that Gen. 1:1 and Jn. 1:1 are at odds. The important point Augustine is relying on throughout this sermon is that Scripture, whether written by Moses, John, or Paul, all agree because they have the same divine *uoluntas*. But they do not agree by saying the exact same thing in the same way. Nor should we expect them to. Some passages are more easily accessible, while others are shrouded in mystery. But this is all a part of the divine strategy.

The important thing is that the reader follows the proper dialectical process involved in reading Scripture. It is this process that is paramount for determining the meaning of "beginning" in Gen. 1:1. One might certainly read the "beginning" of Gen. 1:1 as a reference to the beginning

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[116] *Serm.* 1.5. Augustine offers numerous other examples in this same passage. In Matt. 5:34-35, Jesus says that heaven is God's throne and earth is his footstool. But, Augustine points out, just because he makes no mention of himself in this passage, does not mean that he is not also enthroned in heaven. Or again, he points to Rom. 11:33, where Paul speaks of the depths of God's wisdom and knowledge without referencing the Son. Surely, Augustine reasons, one should not suppose that the Son is not also included despite the fact that he is not explicitly named.

[117] For what this reveals about the Word specifically, see *serm.* 118 and *serm.* 119.

of time if John did not use it to refer to the Word. However, the two parts of the one narrative create a kind of dialectical tension through which the interpreter finds a deeper meaning in the narrative. In this way, the narrative of the creation account now leads beyond itself. It uses material language and temporal sequence to guide its readers into the contemplation of the eternal Word. The ultimate goal of the exegetical exercise in which Augustine leads his congregation is to guide them beyond the literal reading of the text to the contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity in creation.

The Manicheans' error was not their refusal to accept a specific interpretation of a particular passage. Their error was their failure to recognize the harmony of Scripture found through its dialectical character. Because of this error, they remain at the literal, or carnal, level. But by recognizing Scripture's strategy, one learns to inhabit it and be guided by its inner dialectic to a figurative reading. This response would have only been too natural for Augustine, who was well-acquainted with *narratio*, in which later layers build on earlier ones, drawing out sometimes subtle figurative meaning from them. The later parts of a narrative, therefore, illuminate the *uoluntas* of the author in earlier parts. Recognizing this and then interpreting the *narratio* as such takes the reader beyond a literal reading—beyond the *narratio* itself—and guides one into the realm of the figurative and theoretical. In the case of Gen. 1:1, this dialectical process can be found in the word "beginning." Without the dialectic between the earlier and later layers of the narrative, the reader is bound by the literal meaning of the text. However, by bringing other parts of the divine narrative into dialogue with the first scene depicted in Gen. 1:1, Augustine models the process by which the *narratio* of Scripture guides its readers beyond its temporal manifestation and into the contemplation of the realm of intelligible ideas.

The Sabbath

The second important aspect of the creation narrative is Augustine's figurative reading of the Sabbath. In *serm.* 4, Augustine offers an extended sermon on the two covenants, focusing primarily on the figures of Jacob and Esau. However, he touches on the creation account in a pivotal section of the sermon. In section 8 he begins to discuss how the Old Testament lifts its readers beyond the temporal order and guides them into contemplation of eternal, spiritual realities. "Everyone begins by living materialistically" by virtue of their material birth, Augustine explains.[118] However, we must not remain materialistic in our thinking, but must progress to the contemplation of spiritual realities. This process is embodied in the Old Testament, which "contained temporal promises, but spiritual meanings."[119] Thus, the temporal promises in the Old Testament—the land, the sign of circumcision, the Sabbath, and the sacrifices—were all endowed with spiritual meaning. Any who are incapable of understanding these things spiritually, Augustine says, do not belong to the new covenant.[120] With this, he considers briefly how to understand the Sabbath spiritually. He observes an argument *a differentia* at work in the narrative in the fact that that in each of the first six days recorded in the creation account, it says that there was evening, but of the seventh day it does not. This, he explains, signals the argument *a contraria* at work between the first six days and the seventh day. The number six signifies time,[121] while the number seven signifies our eternal rest and the presence of the Spirit.[122]

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[118] *Serm.* 4.8 (CCSL 41 23; Hill, 1:189): *unusquisque incipit carnaliter vivere.*

[119] *Serm.* 4.8 (CCSL 41 23; Hill, 1:189): *uetus promissiones habebat temporales, sed significationes spirituales.*

[120] *Serm.* 4.8.

[121] *Serm.* 110A.5.

[122] *Serm.* 4.8. Cf. *serm.* 9.6.

He elaborates on this point in *serm.* 270.[123] He observes that there is no mention of the first six days being sanctified, but we are told that God sanctified the seventh day.[124] Of course, Augustine remarks, God's rest should not be interpreted to mean he was tired from the work of creating the world. This is a "carnal way of thinking" (*carnalis est ista cogitatio*), Augustine insists.[125] Instead, where Scripture speaks of God's rest, we should understand our future rest being prefigured. Just as God observed his work of creating to be good, so also if we have done good works at the end of time we will participate in his rest eternally.[126] Even the literal observance of the Sabbath, which God commanded Israel to observe by refraining from sin, is a rite which signifies a deeper reality. This reality is, Augustine claims, the presence of the Holy Spirit, signified by the number 7 throughout Scripture.[127]

The observance of the Sabbath by Israel is, then, to be taken as a "shadow of things to come" (*umbra futurorum*).[128] The light which makes plain the spiritual meaning prefigured in the shadow began to shine when Christ came, but it will only be fully manifest at the end of time. Therefore, the signs contained in the shadow can be discerned in the present time, but it requires work to discern these signs.[129]

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[123] This sermon was likely preached on the day of Pentecost in 416. Based on the tone and length, Hill suggests that this sermon was preached to a small group of faithful, rather than the faithful at large. See Hill WSA III/7, 293, n. 1.

[124] *Serm.* 270.5.

[125] *Serm.* 270.5. (PL 38 1244; Hill, 7:290). Cf. *serm.* 125.4.

[126] *Serm.* 270.5.

[127] *Serm.* 270.5.

[128] *Serm.* 125A.2 (MA 1 371; Hill, 4:266).

[129] *Serm.* 179A.3.

The Flood

The second episode that has been central in Augustine's mediation of Scripture to those under his care at Hippo is the account of the flood. Augustine only deals with the flood in any significant way one time in his body of sermons to the faithful, and it occurs when the wrong passage was read by the lector. Nevertheless, this one example further illustrates his emphasis on the dialectical and figurative dimensions of Scripture in these sermons. Here we find him using the flood as an image of the final judgement. In *serm.* 114B, the lector read Luke 17:20-27, which was the wrong passage for that day.[130] This passage refers to the flood as an image for the future day of judgement. Augustine, taking this as a sign of "the good management of the Lord" (*ordinatione domini*), preaches extemporaneously on this passage.[131] This passage presents a prime example of Augustine's use of the quality of *narratio* that draws on the interplay between the whole and the part. He explains that the building of the ark was a "herald, crying out, Be converted to God," just as the Church is being constructed by God in the present time as a witness to his mercy.[132] Christ, he tells his audience, is putting together the structure of his Church "by felling beams of wood that cannot rot from the forests of the nations," and this structure is crying out.[133] This serves as the image of the Church's relationship to the world: she is the ark of salvation in which those of faith will escape the flood of judgement.[134]

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[130] Dolbeau gives a complex but convincing argument that this sermon dates to the winter of 403-404 and is connected to *serm.* 361, *serm.* 362, *serm.* 23B, and *en. Ps.* 147. See Francois Dolbeau, «Les sermons de saint Augustine découverts à Mayence. Un premier bilan» in *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 137 (1993): 153-171.

[131] *Serm.* 114B.1 (*REAug* 39 73; Hill, 11:102). His goal was actually to connect this passage to a psalm and preach on that psalm (1.1), but he ends up spending all his time focused on the Gospel passage (see sec. 7).

[132] *Serm.* 114B.2 (*REAug* 39 74; Hill, 11:103): *quodammodo fabricatio arcae istius praeco est clamans: conuertimini ad deum.*

[133] *Serm.* 114B.2 (*REAug* 39 74; Hill, 11:103): *adhuc ligna imputribilia caeduntur de silua.*

[134] *Serm.* 114B.7.

He goes on to encourage his audience to flee into the ark while there is still time, but the important point for our purposes is how he makes use of the flood account—which is a part of the divine *narratio*—as the entire *narratio*. He explains that the entire divine *narratio* of Scripture and including the present time is the time in which the ark is being built. This makes use of the parts/whole relationship, one of the most effective tools *narratio* possesses. The whole *narratio* is contained in one episode within the *narratio* in a mysterious way. However, in order to recognize it, one must pay particular attention to the similarities between elements of this episode and the rest of Scripture. This allows one to follow the dialectical process and come to see the immaterial reality to which this episode ultimately points.

The Exodus

Augustine discusses the exodus account in two of his sermons to the faithful.[135] In the first instance, Augustine offers some important reflection on how the faithful ought to read the exodus and subsequent narrative. He explains that Scripture interprets itself for two ends: to guide readers in what is said clearly for spiritual nourishment and to exercise them, spiritually, by what is said obscurely. He begins by referring to 1 Cor. 10:1-11, one of his favourite passages to teach how one ought to read the Old Testament.[136] All the details of the exodus are to be understood as *sacramenta diuina*, he says, which foretell things that were going to happen.[137] Therefore, he goes on, "from this text, dearly beloved, none of the faithful will have the least doubt that the passage of that people through the Red Sea was a model or type of our

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[135] A third and extensive example is found in *serm.* 8, which he preached at Carthage. However, while that sermon reinforces many of the themes I point out here, I will limit my comments mostly to those sermons likely preached at Hippo.

[136] *Serm.* 363.1.

[137] *Serm.* 363.1.

baptism."[138] He links the exodus to the liturgical context of baptism, just as when he was preaching to the neophytes, but it is important to note that here his goal is much more ambitious. He is not simply interested in orienting his readers to the future as the people God has delivered from slavery; now he wants to use a figurative reading of the exodus narrative to have his audience rise beyond the narrative itself. The link between the faithful and the Israelites in the desert is based on the fact that both live by faith in hope for the promised land. This present life, he tells his congregation, is a journey through the desert because in it, we too tolerate trials by looking forward in hope to the future.[139] However, he insists that the image or model of Israel's wilderness journey must be understood in a spiritual sense. Thus, we too should join the song of exultation sung by the Israelites upon their deliverance. But we do so only by reading the account spiritually.

The second sermon where he discusses the exodus comes in *serm.* 352, where he preaches on Psalm 51 after the lector mistakenly read it.[140] In this sermon, Augustine addresses the topic of repentance to two distinct audiences: the catechumens and the faithful. In the first place, he speaks to the *competentes* preparing for baptism. He begins by recounting Israel's wanderings, and he instructs his audience how to read this *narratio* figuratively in the process. His remarks directed at this first group are centred on arguing for the importance of repentance as a part of baptism, so that they may "lift up their spirits in hope" (*erigant mentes in spem*) and

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[138] *Serm.* 363.2 (PL 39 1635; Hill, 10:270): *hinc itaque, dilectissimi, nullus fidelium dubitauerit, transitum illius populi per mare rubrum figuram fuisse baptismi nostri.*

[139] *Serm.* 363.3 (PL 39 1636; Hill, 10:271): *pro spe futurae uitae praesentia mala tolerant.*

[140] This sermon was likely preached not long before Easter, when these *competentes* would be baptised, though it was directed to the whole gathered assembly. In all likelihood, it was probably preached on the second Sunday during lent. See Hill, 5:149, n. 1.

have their love directed toward becoming what they are not yet.[141] However, when he turns to

address the other group of his audience—the faithful—his remarks take on a decidedly more

figurative tone. He begins by appealing to 1 Cor. 10:1-6, pointing out that when the text recounts

how Israel was baptized "in Moses in the cloud and in the sea," and how they "ate the same

spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink" from the rock who the Apostle states was

Christ (vv. 1-4), it shows us these things to be our models (v. 6). This is the key to what

Augustine will say in the rest of the sermon: the exegetical principle serves as the basis for his

argument that Christians along each stage must repent. Augustine comments that, when we are

told that the rock from which Israel drank is Christ, we should take this as an exegetical hint. He

says, "In explaining a single item, he [Paul] left us the others to be inquired into."[142] The

question for the exegete, then, is how to interpret these figurative signs—the sea, the cloud, and

the manna—in such a way that they will serve as models for us. The sea, he explains, is baptism,

but, since water by itself has no power to save, the water is "signed with his cross" (*cruce ipsius*

aqua signatur), as it were, indicated by the name of "Red sea."[143] The manna, too, is powerless

to save by itself unless it is understood as prefiguring the true manna who would set us free from

death, namely Christ. The "light" offered by the Apostle amongst the "densest possible thickets"

of figural meaning by identifying the rock as Christ shines through the whole passage.[144]

     After this initial explanation, Augustine instructs his audience to act like "keen and

careful and attentive students" so they will "make good progress, and know both how to read and

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[141] *Serm.* 352.2 (PL 39 1550; Hill, 10:138).

[142] *Serm.* 352.3 (PL 39 1551; Hill, 10:138-39): *soluendo unum aliquid, caetera proposuit inquirenda.*

[143] *Serm.* 352.3 (PL 39 1551; Hill, 10:139).

[144] *Serm.* 352.3 (PL 39 1551; Hill, 10:139): *in quibusdam quasi dumetis densissimis et crassa umbra lumen accendit: petra, inquit, erat christus.*

to listen to good effect."[145] He then guides his congregation into a further examination of verse 3, where we are told that Israel "ate the same spiritual food." He asks, "What does *the same* mean, if not the same as we do?"[146] If it means that there is no difference between the manna Israel ate and the bread we eat at the Lord's table today, Augustine observes, the significance of Christ's work is cancelled out. He points out that this would seem to be the case if the text omitted the word "spiritual." But, there is a subtle argument *a contraria* at work here between the word "spiritual" and the word "food." Food, in its literal sense, is not spiritual, but material; yet, the passage tells us that the similarity between the food they ate and the food we eat is "spiritual." The argument *a contraria* points the reader to the argument *a similitudine*, which is what the figurative meaning of this passage is based on. The same food must be understood, therefore, as spiritual nourishment. Because it says that they ate the same *spiritual* food, Augustine says, we can infer that those who ate the manna in order to have "their bellies fed, not their minds," ate "bodily food, not spiritual food," while those who ate manna in faith partook of the same spiritual food we partake of in the Lord's Supper today. He explains: "There were people there, you see, who could understand what they were eating; there were some there who had a better taste of Christ in their hearts than of the manna in their mouths. . . . [W]hoever understood Christ in the manna, ate the same spiritual food as us; while whoever looked to the manna simply to fill their stomachs, ate as the fathers of unbelievers, and are dead."[147] The same can be said of those who drank from the rock. Those who we imitate, then, are the ones who ate and drank in faith. They had faith that Christ was going to come, and we have faith that he has now come; "different

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[145] *Serm*. 352.3 (PL 39 1551; Hill, 10:139): *sicut studiosi autem et bene uigilantes verba dominica attendite, ut proficiatis et legere et audire noueritis.*

[146] *Serm*. 352.3 (PL 39 1551; Hill, 10:139): *quid est, eumdem, nisi quia eum quem etiam nos?*

[147] *Serm*. 352.3 (PL 39 1551; Hill, 10:140): *erant enim ibi qui quod manducabant, intelligebant: erant ibi quibus plus christus in corde, quam manna in ore sapiebat.*

tenses of the verb," Augustine says, "but the same Christ."[148] The meaning of this Old Testament episode is found by reading it figuratively, following the guidance found in the New Testament.

His emphasis on the figurative quality of *narratio*, it must be noted, does not diminish the historicity of the episode. In a sermon preached at Carthage, Augustine offers a spiritual interpretation of the ten plagues.[149] At the outset of the sermon, he quotes Wisdom 11:20, which says, "You have arranged all things in measure and number and weight," and refers to 1 Corinthians 10:11, saying that there "we are clearly instructed" to "perceive the invisible things of God through our understanding of the things that have been made, and to search out the hidden things through those that are plain."[150] History and nature attest to God, in a similar way as Scripture does. He admonishes them, saying, "So question creation, so to speak, on all sides, and it replies by its very appearance, as if it were its voice, that it has the Lord God as its designer and builder."[151] Augustine here is speaking of events in history, specifically, all of which play a role in God's grand design. But the events recorded in Scripture, he goes on, are even more significant, for "if painstaking research and sifting of evidence, if careful investigation and assessment show that things which appear to happen by chance in nature really declare the praises of their creator, and point to divine providence spread abroad in all things. . .

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[148] *Serm*. 352.3 (PL 39 1551; Hill, 10:140): *diversa verba sunt, sed idem christus.*

[149] *Serm*. 8 is usually dated to sometime between 403 to 415, though this dating is hardly decisive. For a consideration of the shaky ground dating this sermon is on, see Hubertus Drobner, "The Chronology of Saint Augustine's *Sermones ad populum* II: Sermons 5-8" *AugStud* 34 (2003): 63-65. Though scholars agree that this sermon was not preached to his congregation at Hippo, it contains many of the same stylistic elements found in Augustine's sermons to the faithful in his own congregation. This suggests that, while he is not preaching to the faithful in his own flock, he is preaching to a group of faithful who would be in the same stage of their spiritual journey.

[150] *Serm*. 8.1 (CCSL 41 79; Hill, 1:240): *domino deo nostro, cuius cultores sumus, in laude dictum est quodam scripturarum loco: omnia in mensura et numero et pondere disposuisti. d einde apostolica doctrina edocemur inuisibilia dei per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspicere, et ea quae latent per manifesta inuestigare.*

[151] *Serm*. 8.1 (CCSL 41 79; Hill, 1:240): *unde interrogata quodammodo ubique creatura, dominum deum se artificem habere, ipsa speciei suae quadam quasi uoce respondet.*

how much more is this the case with the events which not only happened but also have the authority of the divine writings to attest them?"[152] Apparently there were some who held that the story of the ten plagues was a work of fiction.[153] Instead, Augustine launches into an explanation of the ten plagues in Egypt, which he is careful to point out, "we believe that they happened as we read that they happened, and yet we know through the apostle's teaching that the actual events were shadows of things to come."[154] He claims that it is important to "begin by laying the foundation of the solid reality of the events, and then go on to inquire into their figurative meaning."[155] For him the historical veracity only adds depth to the figurative meaning.[156]

Conclusion

Significantly, *narratio* possesses the unique ability to move its audience beyond the very temporality that conditions it in the first place by way of seeking the divine authorial intent. This requires one to follow the dialectical processes embedded in *narratio* and trace the figurative meaning which results. Throughout his discussion of these three key passages, there is a common tension between the material signs and the immaterial referents to which they point, which

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[152] *Serm*. 8.1 (CCSL 41 79; Hill, 1:240): *si ea quae uidentur in rerum natura quasi fortuito prouenire, perscrutata diligenter atque discussa et prudenter uestigata et inuenta laudem intimant creatoris, diuinam que prouidentiam per cuncta diffusam et disponentem, ut dictum est, suauiter omnia cum attingit a fine usque in finem fortiter, quanto magis ea, quae non solum facta, uerum etiam diuinis litteris commendata recitantur?*

[153] *Serm*. 8.1-2.

[154] *Serm*. 8.2 (CCSL 41 80; Hill, 1:241) *sed facta credimus quemadmodum facta legimus, et tamen ipsa facta umbras fuisse futurorum apostolica doctrina cognoscimus.*

[155] *Serm*. 8.2 (CCSL 41 80; Hill, 1:241) *ita prius in fundamento posita rerum gestarum firmitate significantia debemus inquirere.*

[156] He states this quite forcefully in *serm*. 2.7 (Hill, 1:180): "Above all, brothers and sisters, I urge and command you as strongly as I can in the name of the Lord that when you hear the mystery of the scripture explained as it narrates what happened, you first believe that what is read happened just as the reading says it did. Otherwise you will remove the foundation which is the event and you will end up trying as it were to build on air."

Augustine uses to guide his audience into a figurative reading. By recognizing the rhetorical devices in the text, the reader is able to follow the dialectical, figurative process embedded in the *narratio* and ascend beyond a literal and material reading Scripture. It is Augustine's concern to guide his congregation into such a figurative reading that marks his use of Scripture in these sermons as unique from the sermons he preached to the catechumens and neophytes. After all, he says, "we shouldn't come to school unprepared; we ought to know in what sense to take the words of the scriptures. Otherwise, when something is heard from the [B]ible which is normally understood in another secular sense, hearers may be misled, and by taking for granted what they have been used to, may fail to understand what they have heard."[157]

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that Augustine's use of Scripture in his sermons to the faithful reflects a third aspect of his appropriation of *narratio* in his spiritual theology of Scripture. The faithful constitute those at the third stage of the spiritual maturation process, and Augustine's use of Scripture in these sermons similarly marks the third of three progressive stages in his application of Scripture. The previous two stages, where Augustine used Scripture as a *narratio* in judicial and deliberative senses respectively, prepare his audience for this third and final stage, where they are guided into the meditation on the eternal and immaterial mystery of God. In particular, I have claimed that his use of Scripture at this stage is characterized by a noticeable emphasis on the dialectical principles inherent within *narratio*. This emphasis, in turn, produces, and indeed requires, closer attention to Scripture's figurative meaning.

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[157] *Serm.* 74.1 (PL 38 472; Hill, 3:299) *debemus enim non frustra intrare scholam, sed nosse in qua significatione scripturarum uerba teneamus: ne cum aliquid de scripturis sonuerit, quod in alio saeculari usu intelligi solet, aberret auditor, et cogitando quod consueuit, non intelligat quod audiuit.*

My argument requires that one find a way to treat Augustine's large and variegated body of sermons to the faithful in a somewhat systematic way. I have sought to do this in two main respects. First, I have suggested that the dialogical tone or style consistently present in these sermons points to a common underlying strategy. Based on this strategy, then, these sermons can be treated as a collection unified by the fact that they are directed to those at a similar stage in their spiritual journeys, even if they represent various social classes. Second, I have focused my attention primarily on those sermons where Augustine preached on three particular episodes that have proven to be key in his appropriation of *narratio* in the first two stages: creation, the flood, and the exodus. By focusing on these three episodes in particular, we can more easily note the continuity with, as well as the difference from, the previous two stages I have outlined in this study and so appreciate with greater clarity how Augustine uses Scripture to continue to lead his audience into greater spiritual maturity.

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CONCLUSION

Peter Brown writes that "Augustine's view of the Christian life" is determined by an "antithesis of transience and eternity."[1] Brown is correct; for Augustine, temporal existence is scattered and disintegrated, lacking the fullness, permanence and unity found in the eternal life of God. Eternity is humanity's proper "home," where it will find true rest.[2] Brown is also right to point out that, for Augustine, the Christian's chief aim in this life is to seek God "with the yearning of the uncomplete to be filled, of the transient to gain stability."[3] It is the particular and central role of Scripture in that journey to fullness which I have attempted to chart in this study.

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of Scripture for the Christian life in Augustine's thought. He viewed Scripture as having a unique, spiritual character, which means that it is bound up with every aspect of the individual's spiritual maturation process. In order to bring out this unique character of Scripture more clearly, I have turned primarily to Augustine's sermons, where we can see him applying Scripture to the lives of those in his congregation in a direct way. Within these sermons, I have identified three distinct stages in his understanding of the spiritual maturation process, which serve as the framework for my study. I have considered how Augustine applies Scripture to to those at each of these stages—the catechumens, neophytes, and the faithful—respectively, and I have attempted to trace how these three successive stages reveal three progressive levels of engagement with Scripture.

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[1] Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biograophy* (rev. ed.; Berkley, CA: Univeristy of California Press, 2000), 242.

[2] See *Conf.* 4.15.31.

[3] Brown, *Augustine,* 242.

My thesis has been especially attentive to three factors. First, I have attempted to ground my analysis in Augustine's fundamental conviction that the essence of God transcends all human comprehension, for temporal minds cannot grasp eternity. The driving question behind his theology of Scripture, then, is how human minds can know anything about God. Second, drawing from the growing appreciation of the rhetorical background in Augustine's view of Scripture, I have sought to be especially aware of the close relationship between thought and form in his sermons. *How* Scripture communicates, and thus how Augustine mediates Scripture, reveals *what* he understands the character of Scripture to be. Third, and on the basis of the first two factors, I have identified *narratio* as especially important for Augustine's theology of Scripture. *Narratio* provides the levels by which one can mount up to contemplate eternal realities. Because it has the unique character of using temporal sequences to guide one to the contemplation of eternity, it is a ready-made tool for him to make sense of the divine revelation of Scripture. I have argued that a different application of *narratio* is present at each stage of the maturation process: when speaking to the catechumens, Augustine uses Scripture as a descriptive *narratio*, just as it would normally be used in a judicial oration, in order to make a sustained case for the character of the Catholic Church; when preaching to the neophytes, makes use of the prescriptive and proscriptive roles of *narratio*, just as it would normally function in a deliberative oration, in order to impress on them how they ought to live; and when preaching to the faithful, he relies on the dialectical qualities embedded within *narratio* in order to guide his congregation beyond the temporal realm to the contemplation of the eternal. In each of these stages, the audience's perspective on Scripture changes, and they take on an increasingly active role in it, as his reliance on figurative interpretation also increases.

Looking back, we find that the end goal of having his congregants rise beyond the temporal realm is hinted at all along; thus, the first two stages lead to the third. In *De catechizandis rudibus* he tells Deogratias that the ultimate goal of the catechist is to see those he is instructing turn their hearts to heaven. Again, after they are baptised and have become neophytes, he tells them that they must learn to do away with a carnal interpretation. But in the first and second stages, Augustine says very little of the rise beyond the temporal conditions of the narrative. To be sure, he demands figurative interpretation at each stage, but how he employs that interpretation is in keeping with his strategy. In the first stage, he interprets a number of pivotal Old Testament passages figuratively in order to bring out the character of the Church; in the second stage, he interprets the same passages figuratively in order to include his audience within the narrative; but in the third stage, we find him using figurative interpretation to draw his audience's minds to the contemplation of God. The first two stages pave the way for the third, climactic stage. Because he recognized that one can only begin to plumb the depths of Scripture's meaning from within the Church, he laboured especially hard in the first two stages to see those under his care join with the Church in her ascent to the vision of God through Christ. He pleads with them, saying: "Be a part of him, who is the only one to have ascended. You see, he the head is, with the rest of his body, one person, one man. And . . . none can go up unless they have been incorporated in him as members of his body."[4] Thus, it is only once we turn to his sermons to the faithful that we find him engaging in figurative interpretation in any significant extent. Before that, he was concerned to have his congregants fully initiated into the Church, the vehicle for their ascent.

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[4] *Serm.* 91.7 (PL 38 570; Hill, 3:462): *membrum ipsius esto, qui solus ascendit. etenim ille caput cum caeteris membris unus homo est. et cum ascendere nemo potest, nisi qui in eius corpore membrum ipsius.*

Each of these three successive stages, therefore, reveals an aspect of the divine *narratio* that leads one through the process of spiritual maturation, toward the vision of God. In the first stage, Augustine employs the simplist kind of reading of Scripture, where he uses it to persuade the will of the catechumens to enter the Catholic Church. In the second stage, he begins to emphasize some of Scripture's deeper figurative dimensions as he seeks to shape the identity of the neophytes as morally upright Christians. And, finally, in the third stage, Augustine relies heavily on the dialectical qualities of Scripture in order to guide the ascent of the faithful from the world of material images to the contemplation of immaterial, eternal realities. Each of these stages reflects a dimension of Scripture that coincides with the appropriate point of the spiritual maturation process—the process through which one's soul is progressively shaped so as to be able to contemplate God in eternity.

Augustine is sure to make the point that vision of eternity is impossible in this life. He reminds Deogratias of this in *De catechizandis rudibus* when explaining the catechist's role at even the first stage of the maturation process: "Not even love itself is strong enough to break through the murkiness of the flesh and penetrate into that eternally clear sky from which even the things that pass away receive whatever brightness they have." Yet, he goes on to say that progress can still be made, nevertheless: "But good people make progress from day to day toward the vision that will be theirs on that day when the heavens no longer revolve and night falls no more."[5]

A salient theme underlying my argument is that Augustine's application of Scripture in this way reveals the theology of Scripture that informs his hermeneutic. The close connection

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[5] *Cat. rud.* 2.4 (CCSL 46 123; Canning, 62): *nec ipse amor tantus est, ut carnis disrupta caligine penetret in aeternum serenum, unde utcumque fulgent etiam ista quae transeunt. sed quia boni proficiunt de die in diem ad uidendum diem sine uolumine caeli et sine noctis incurs.*

between his use of Scripture and the progressive stages of the Christian maturation process is only possible because of the inherently spiritual character of Scripture in the first place. It is masterfully composed in such a way that it should not be interpreted apart from the maturation process. Because of Scripture's unique character by which it guides its readers into the contemplation of God, Augustine is adamant that Scripture must be approached properly— namely, with humility. For him, ultimately, reading Scripture is not about finding answers to difficult questions; it is about entering into the divine mystery:

> "Paul found rest because he found . . . because he found wonder. So don't ask me, any of you, to explain hidden things. He says, *inscrutable are his judgements,* and have you come to scrutinize them? He says, *unsearchable are his ways*, and have you come to search them out? If you have come to scrutinize the inscrutable and come to search out the unsearchable, believe, because you are lost. Wanting to scrutinize the inscrutable and search out the unsearchable is exactly the same as wanting to see what cannot be seen and utter what cannot be uttered."[6]

Learning to read Scripture properly involves the process by which one enters into the divine mystery. The interpreter never masters the sacred text, but must always submit to its humble character. Whether or not one is able to understand what Scripture says, he cautions his congregation "not to be unduly troubled when you don't yet understand the holy scriptures; when you do understand them, not to get a swollen head. Instead, respectfully put to one side anything you don't understand, and anything you do understand hold firmly to in a spirit of love."[7] Understanding is a spiritual process and the capacity for perceiving the divine mystery increases in proportion to one's maturity in the faith.

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[6] *Serm.* 27.7 (CCSL 41 366; Hill, 2:108): *requieuit, quia inuenit, quia inuenit admirationem. nemo a me quaerat occultorum rationem. ille dicit: inscrutabilia sunt iudicia eius, et tu scrutari uenisti? ille dicit, inuestigabiles sunt uiae eius, et tu uestigare uenisti? si inscrutabilia scrutari uenisti, et inuestigabilia uestigare uenisti, crede, nam peristi. tale est uelle scrutari inscrutabilia et inuestigabilia uestigare, quale est uelle inuisibilia uidere et ineffabilia fari.*

[7] *Serm.* 51.35 (RB 91 45; Hill, 3:43): *illud ante omnia retinete, ut scripturis sanctis nondum intellectis non perturbemini; intelligentes autem non inflemini: sed et quod non intelligitis, cum honore differatis; et quod intelligitis, cum charitate teneatis.* Cf. *serm.* 91.3.

Augustine explains in an intimate moment with his audience that, when he was young, he "wanted to tackle the divine scriptures with the techniques of clever disputation before bringing to them the spirit of earnest inquiry." This, he says amounted to him "shutting the door" of God: "I should have been knocking at it for it to be opened," he explains, "but instead I was adding my weight to keep it shut."[8] The foundational step in learning to read Scripture properly is humility—the recognition of Scripture's humility requires the recognition of the reader's humble position. Augustine admits to his congregation:

> I am speaking to you as one who was myself caught out once upon a time, when as a lad I wanted to tackle the divine scriptures with the techniques of clever disputation before bringing to them the spirit of earnest inquiry. In this way I was shutting the door of my Lord against myself by my misplaced attitude; I should have been knocking at it for it to be opened, but instead I was adding my weight to keep it shut. I was presuming to seek in my pride what can only be found by humility.[9]

He recalls in his *Confessions* how, as a young man, he had a low estimation of the Catholic Scriptures. While Cicero's *Hortensius* caused his heart to burn "with longing for the immortality that wisdom seemed to promise,"[10] he found the Scriptures to be "crude" and "unworthy" (*indigna*) in comparison.[11] However, through the preaching of Ambrose, Augustine came to understand humility as the true character of Scripture, which requires an appropriate reading. This was the insight which characterized Augustine's future exegesis and theology of preaching more than anything else. Looking back on his earlier rejection of Scripture, Augustine comments: "I was in no state to enter, nor prepared to bow my head and accommodate myself to

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[8] *Serm*. 51.6 (Hill, 3:24).

[9] *Serm*. 51.6 (RB 91 27: Hill, 3:24): *loquor uobis, aliquando deceptus, cum primo puer ad diuinas scripturas ante uellem afferre acumen discutiendi, quam pietatem quaerendi: ego ipse contra me peruersis moribus claudebam ianuam domini mei: quam pulsare deberem, ut aperiretur; addebam, ut clauderetur. superbus enim audebam quaerere, quod nisi humilis non potest inuenire.* Cf. *conf*. 3.

[10] *Conf*. 3.4.7.

[11] *Conf*. 3.5.9.

its ways." Because he "disdained to be a little child (*paruulus*)" and thought of himself "as grown up," he was unable to appreciate the Scriptures.[12] Once he did see their unique character, however, he came to see that they demanded a humble reader. Approached from this perspective, Augustine came to see that Scripture is "lowly as one enters but lofty as one advances further (*incessu humilem, successu excelsam*)."[13] Once he understood *humilitas* to be the central feature of divine revelation, he came to marvel at the fact that, through humility, Scripture is "veiled in mystery."[14]

By approaching Scripture with humility, the reader is able to be formed by it, eventually being transformed to be able to see God. Human language, Augustine claims, is incapable of uttering divine mysteries; it always falls short. The real difference between those who interpret materialistically and those who interpret Scripture spiritually is that the former have not participated in the "mutual transformation" that takes place when one approaches Scripture humbly. Just because the eternal unity of God cannot be expressed in words does not mean that, by degrees, one cannot come to meditate on that divine mystery. He reminds his congregation that, while it is true that one cannot say anything that one cannot also think, "it's also true that you can think something which you cannot also say."[15] In other words, just because human language precludes one from speaking in immaterial terms does not mean that it is impossible to contemplate the eternal God. However, learning to perceive that which is beyond the limits of time and language involves a long process of faithfully living the Christian life. This, I have

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[12] *Conf.* 3.5.9.

[13] *Conf.* 3.5.9.

[14] *Conf.* 3.5.9.

[15] *Serm.* 117.7 (PL 38 665; Hill, 4:213): *homo enim nihil potest dicere, quod non etiam sentire possit: potest etiam aliquid sentire, quod dicere non possit.*

argued, is the fundamental principle behind Augustine's spiritual theology of Scripture in his *Sermones ad populum*.

I began this thesis by remarking that it is important to examine patristic thinkers in their proper historical, social, theological, and philosophical contexts before going on to characterize patristic exegesis or patristic theologies of Scripture wholesale. In the case of Augustine, I have suggested that this means paying attention to the way he makes use of a rhetorical framework to overcome philosophical challenges and facilitate spiritual progress. In other words, it means making sense of Scripture only in the context of the Christian life. By making use of Scripture along the trajectory of the process of spiritual maturation, Augustine guides his congregation through the different levels of Scripture's meaning so that, "by degrees," they are able to "glimpse the glory of that eternity which abides forever."[16]

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[16] *Conf.* 11.11.13.

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Cons. eu.	*De consensu euangelistarum*. CSEL 43.
corrept.	*de correptione et gratia*. PL 44.
Dail.	*De dialectica.* PL 32.
Doc. chr.	*De doctrina christiana*. CCSL 32; NPNF First Series, 2; *Augustine: On Christian Teaching.* Trans. R. P. C. Green. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.
Ench.	*Enchiridion ad Laurentium de fide et spe et caritate*. CCSL 46.
En. Ps.	*Enarrationes in Psalmos*. CCSL 38, 39, 40; *Expositions of the Psalms*. Trans. Maria Boulding. WSA III/15-20. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2000-2004.

Ep.	*Epistulae.* I have referred only to *ep.* 23, 82, 54, 102, and 147. For these, see CSEL 34, 44. For details on other letters, see the table by Robert Eno in Fitzgerald, *Augustine Encyclopedia*, 299-305.
Exp. Rom.	*Expositio quarumdam propositionum ex epistola ad Romanos.* CSEL 84.
F. et. op.	*De fide et operibus.* CSEL 41.
Mor.	*De moribus ecclesiae catholicae.* PL 32.
Ord.	*De ordine.* CCSL 29.
Trin.	*De Trinitate.* CCSL 50, 50A.
Gen. Man.	*De Genesi contra manichaeos.* PL 34.
Io. eu. tr.	*Tractus in euangelium Iohannis.*
Lib. arb.	*De libero arbitrio.* CCSL 29.
Mor.	*De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus manichaeorum.* PL 32.
Serm.	*Sermone.* There is no complete edition of Augustine's sermons in Latin. For details of modern editions, see the table by Eric Rebillard in Fitzgerald, *Augustine Encyclopedia*, 774-79; *Sermons.* Trans. Edmond Hill. WSA 3/1-11. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1990-97.
Sol.	*Soliloquia.* CSEL 89; *Soliloquies: Augustine's Inner Dialogue.* Trans. Kim Paffenroth. SA II. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2000.
Symb. cat.	*De symbol ad catechumenos* (= *serm.* 398). CCSL 46; *Sermons.* Trans. Edmund Hill. WSA III/10. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1995.
Uer. rel.	*De uera religione.* CCSL 32; *On Christian Belief.* Trans. Edmund Hill. WSA I/8. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 29-104.

Cicero

Top.	*Topica.* Trans. H. M. Hubbell. LCL 386. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949.
Inu.	*De inuentione.* Trans. H. M. Hubbell. LCL 386. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949.
Leg.	*De legibus. On the Laws.* Trans. Clinton Walker Keyes. LCL 213. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928.
Orat.	*De oratore. On the Orator.* Trans. E. W. Sutton, H. Rackham. LCL 348. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942.
Part. or.	*De partitione oratoriae.* Trans. H. Rackham. LCL 349. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942; rev. ed. 1960.

Cyprian

Ad Quir.	*Ad Quirinum.* CCSL 3.

Egeria

Per.	*Peregrinatio.* SC 21; *Egeria's Travels.* Trans. John Wilkinson. London: SPCK,

1971.

Cyril of Jerusalem

Procat.   *Procatechesis.* PG 33; NPNF 2/7; *The Works of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem,* 2 vols. Trans. Leo McCauley and Anthony Stephenson. FC 61, 64. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1969, 1970.

Gregory of Nyssa

Deit. fil.   *De deitate Filii et Spiritus sancti*. GNO X, 3.

Plato

Gorg.   *Gorgias*; *Plato's Complete Works.* Ed. John M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997.

Seneca

Ep.   *Epistolae morales ad Lucilium. Moral Letters to Lucilius*. Trans. Richard Mott Gummere. LCL; 3 vols. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1917-1925.

Theodore of Mopsuestia

Cat.   *Catechetical Homilies. Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Nicene Creed*. Trans. Alphonse Mingana. Woodbrooke Studies 5. Cambridge: Heffer, 1932.

Quintilian

Inst.   *Institutio oratoria*. OCT, 1970; *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian.* Trans. H. E. Butler. LCL 124. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976.

Tertullian

Paen.   *De paenitentia.* CCSL 1; *Treatises on Penance: On Penitence and On Purity.* ACW 28. Trans. W. P. Le Saint. Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1959.
Spect.   *De spectaculis.* SC 332; *On the Spectacles.* Trans. Rudolph Arbesmann. FC 10. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1959.
Praescr   *De praescriptione haereticorum*. SC 46.

Unknown

Rhet. Her.   *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. Trans. Harry Caplan. LCL 403. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954.

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